

SCRIPTURE LIGHT
THE
MOST SURE LIGHT:

COMPARED WITH

1.—REVELATIONS AND VISIONS. 2.—NATURAL AND SUPERNATURAL DREAMS. 3.—IMPRESSIONS WITH AND WITHOUT THE WORD. 4.—LIGHT AND LAW WITHIN. 5.—DIVINE PROVIDENCE. 6.—CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE. 7.—HUMAN REASON. 8.—JUDICIAL ASTROLOGY.

IN

THREE SERMONS.

SCRIPTURE LIGHT THE MOST SURE LIGHT.

SERMON I.

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."—2 PETER I. 19.

IN these words, ye have an exhortation to a great duty, namely, attention, or taking heed to the word of God in dark and dangerous times and places. The duty is commanded and commended: "Ye do well that ye take heed," *καλως ποιεῖτε*, ye do well, or beautifully; this is your christian beauty and comeliness in the eyes of God. Now this duty is urged and amplified; urged by divers arguments: some taken from the excellency of the word itself. First, It is *λογος προφηπκος*, a word of prophecy, or a prophetical word, written by divine inspiration; the same that is spoken of in verse 20, called prophecy of Scripture. Secondly, It is *λογος βεβαιωτερος*, a more sure word. Some think the comparative is put for the superlative, as Acts xxv. 10, *ως κη συ καλλιον επιγνωσκες*, as thou very well, or best knowest: but I take it rather to be meant comparatively; for the word of God written, is surer than that voice which they heard in the mount, whereof he spake in the former verse. More sure is the word written, than that voice of revelation; not *ratione veritatis*, not in regard of the truth uttered, for that voice was as true as any word in the Scripture; but more sure, *ratione manifestationis*, more certain, settled and established. Secondly, Some arguments are taken from the usefulness of the word to us; for it is as a light shining in a dark place, and therefore it is good for us to take heed thereunto. But how long must we take heed to it? Even as long as we live, and whilst we are in the dark especially, even until the day dawn, and the sun shine in his full strength and brightness in your hearts; which is the second thing whereby this duty is amplified.

Some think that it is to be understood of a supernatural

revelation and light which God doth set up in the soul, which when a man hath obtained, then he is to take heed to the written word no longer; but that cannot be, 1. Because the apostle doth here prefer the written word before a revelation from heaven: now if he do prefer it before a divine revelation, then it is not to give place to the dawning of some special light and revelation in the heart; for then he should destroy in the latter part of the verse, what he had affirmed and built up in the former part. 2. One Scripture is to be explained by another; but Isa. viii. 20, the Lord saith, "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light (or morning) in them:" if therefore any man do pretend light, or the shining of the morning star in his soul, so as to lay by the word written, that light is no true light; and so this interpretation can be no true interpretation of these words. 3. This interpretation doth suppose, that the morning star did not shine in the apostles' time, and that then the apostles, with the saints of those times, had not this light within them; for the apostle saith, "We have a more sure word, and ye do well that ye take heed thereunto." All the saints and people of God, then, did walk by, and take heed unto the written word; yet they had light within them. This interpretation, therefore, is contrary to the sense of the apostle here.

Others think that these words are spoken to the believing Jews, in reference to the prophets of the Old Testament; as if the apostle should say, The glorious light of the gospel hath not yet fully conquered your hearts; and therefore until your gospel light be more clear, you shall do well to take heed to the prophets of the Old Testament, who do all testify with us of Christ. But this will seem to argue, that when gospel light doth more fully rise upon us, then we may lay by the prophets of the Old Testament.

Others think that this day dawning, and the day star arising, doth note that full and clear vision of God and Christ which is yet to come. Now, because the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, in the latter days, in respect to which time it is promised, Rev. ii. 28, "I will give him the morning star;" and in chap. xxii. 16, Christ doth appear to the saints under that title, saying, "I am the bright and morning star."

Therefore it is conceived by some, that the apostle here doth relate to that time, and so the sense of the words should be this: Though now ye be in the dark, yet ye have the light of the Scripture to walk by; whereto ye shall do well that ye take heed, until ye be brought to, and under a more glorious and clear dispensation. But the word used for the morning star, Rev. ii. 22, is not the same that is here used, and translated the day star.

The Scripture shall not be out of date in the days of those glorious times; for the walls of that city, the new Jerusalem, which shall come down from heaven, hath twelve foundations, and in them, the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Rev. xxi. 14.

This interpretation doth suppose that the morning star, or the sun, for so the word may be rendered, as Suidas saith, *Φωσφορος ο το φως αναλλων, ο ηλιος*, doth not shine in our hearts now, and that it hath not shined already, whereas it is said, Luke i. concerning Christ's first coming, verse 78, "Whereby the Day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness," &c. And the apostle Paul saith, The day is far spent; and ye are the children of light and of the day. Surely, therefore, the day had then dawned in those times; and therefore these words cannot only relate to the glorious times that are yet to come.

Others say these words do relate unto heavenly glory; and so the meaning of the words should be, That we are to take heed unto the written word, until we come into heaven; which thing is true: but where do we find in Scripture, that the glory of heaven is said thus to dawn, or shine in our hearts; or that Christ is said thus to shine in our hearts, in regard of heavenly glory?

Therefore I think the word *until*, is not to be taken exclusively, but as in other scriptures; Psalm cx. "Sit thou on my right-hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Shall Christ sit on God's right-hand no longer? Shall he not sit there for ever? Yea, he shall sit there for ever, after all enemies are subdued. But the words shew what Christ shall enjoy and do whilst the enemies rage; he shall sit in power, judging, on the right-hand of God; not that he shall not sit there when they are subdued. So here, "Ye do well (saith the apostle) that ye take heed to the word, until the

day dawn, and the day star arise, and shine in your hearts ;” that is, until ye have more clear light ; not that ye lay by the word then, but because ye are now in the dark, I will tell you, says the apostle, what ye shall do whilst ye are in the dark, even take heed to the word written. And so the doctrine from the whole verse is this :

Scripture light is our great and most sure light, whereunto we shall do well that we take heed, and that especially in our dark times and places.

For the opening and prosecuting whereof, four things will fall under your consideration :

First, That a good man may be in the dark, in a dark place, state and condition.

Secondly, Though he be in the dark, yet God hath not left him without Scripture light to walk by.

Thirdly, This Scripture light is the most excellent, safe and sure light.

Fourthly, It is the duty of all the saints to take heed thereunto, and to walk thereby, and that especially in their dark times and places.

First, It is possible that a good man may be in the dark, on a dark ground, and in a dark condition ; yea, possibly a man may truly fear the Lord, yet he may walk in the dark, and see no light of comfort. Isa. l. 10. Doth not the church complain in the Lamentations, saying, “ He hath set me in dark places ?” chap. iii. 6. Was not David in the dark, when he said, “ The Lord will lighten my darkness ?” 2 Sam. xxii. 29. Was not Job in the dark, when he said, “ The Lord hath set darkness in my paths,” Job xix. 8 ; and when he said, “ I waited for light, and there came darkness ?” chap. xxx. 26. And was not Heman in the dark, when he said, “ Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit in darkness ?” Ps. lxxxviii. 6. Yea, was not Christ himself in the dark, when the hour and power of darkness came upon him ? Luke xxii. 53. Surely, therefore, it is possible that a good man may be in the dark, upon dark ground, and in a dark condition ; and it must needs be so : for,

A good man may live and dwell in a place or town where no means of grace are ; in a poor, dark and ignorant corner of the world. Did not Job dwell in the land of Uz ? And when David thirsted after ordinances, saying, “ My soul

thirsteth after thee, O God, to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary," Psalm lxiii. 1, 2, was he not then in such a dark corner as I now speak of? The title of the Psalm tells us, that he was in the wilderness of Judah: and if ye look into 1 Sam. xxvi. ye shall find him complaining thus: "They have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord, saying, Go serve other gods," verse 19. Such a dark place was Capernaum, and Galilee, by the way of the sea, Galilee of the gentiles, where, Matt. iv. 16, it is said, "The people sat in darkness and in the shadow of death;" yet here did Peter and Andrew dwell, when our Saviour called them to follow him: there did James and John dwell likewise. And as a wicked man may live under the means, and the light shine on him, though he comprehend it not; so it may be the lot and portion of a good man to live, and dwell, and be in a town, or place, or parish, where there is no means and no light shining.

As he may live and dwell in such a place as this, so he may be in some great affliction and persecution; "for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty:" persecuting times are dark times. When do beasts go forth to their prey? but in the night. And when are thieves bold? but in the night. In times of persecution, the enemies of God's people are very bold, and those beasts do go forth to their prey. Surely, therefore, this time is a dark time with the saints.

If a good man may be in such straits, as for the present he doth not see his way before him; then he may be in the dark. Thus it was with Joseph when Mary was first with child; he did not know what to do in the case, until the angel of the Lord appeared to him. Thus it was with David often, especially at Reilah, when he went down to Achish, feigned himself mad, changing his behaviour; and at Ziklag, when his wives and goods were taken from him, and his men thought of stoning him. John xii. 35, "He that walketh in darkness, knows not whither he goes," saith our Saviour. And when a man is in such straits, as that he doth not see his way, then he is in the dark indeed.

A good man may be much offended. Times of offences are dark times: "He that walketh in darkness stumbleth:" and so much as I do take offence, and am stumbled, so much

I am in the dark. Now possibly a good man may be much offended, and stumbled; though he be not offended at the good way of God, and power of godliness, nor at all the saints, yet he may be under much offence: "All you shall be offended (saith our Saviour to his disciples) because of me." And if a good man may be offended, then he may be in the dark, on a dark ground, and in a dark condition.

As a good man may be offended and stumbled, so he may stumble into some mistakes and errors; erroneous times are dark times: every error is darkness, as truth is light. Now a good man may err; for though he doth see much when his eyes are opened in his first conversion, yet every man doth not see all things; two, or three, or four may see, and have their eyes open, yet one may see further than another. God hath several truths for several ages and generations: as in a great house there are hangings for every room, and the hangings of this room are not fit for that, and the hangings of that are not fit for another; so God hath several hangings of truth, to furnish several generations; and those that are fit for this, are not fit for that: *Non nulla video non visa beato Augustino*, says Luther, *et rursum multa visuros scio, quæ ipse ego non video*: I see many things, said he, that were not seen to Austin; and those that come after me, shall see those things that I see not. Oh, saith Austin, there is such a depth in Scripture, that I do *multo plura nescire quam scire*; that I am ignorant of more things than I know. Ye see how it is in a room where there are many pictures; though ye see some of them presently, yet others have a silken curtain drawn before them, which ye see not immediately: so here, though God do reveal much unto you, yet there is a silken curtain that is still drawn before some truths, and therefore even a good man may be much mistaken. "The Lord hath hid this thing from me," said Elisha. 2 Kings iv. 27. And when David told Nathan that it was in his heart to build an house unto God; "Go, (said Nathan to him) and do all that is in thine heart; for the Lord is with thee." Yet Nathan, though a prophet, was mistaken, and in an error; for the same night the Lord appeared to him, and told him that this work was reserved for another, not for David. Possibly, therefore, a good man may mistake, even in the things of God, and so be in the dark.

If a good man may be engaged in some division and dissention, then he may be in the dark. Dividing times are dark times; and possibly a great division and dissention may fall amongst good men. So great and sharp a division fell between Paul and Barnabas, that they forsook one another. I read of two good men, whom Epiphanius makes mention of, that were fellow-sufferers for the christian faith, ἐγγέλονται παροξυσμοῖς; and being condemned, and sent to work in the metal mines, there fell so great a difference between them, that they drew a partition wall between them in the mine, and would not hold communion with each other, in the service of Christ, for which they both suffered. Cyprian doth impute the great sufferings and persecutions of the primitive times, unto the discord and dissention of brethren: *Imo vero nec venissent fratribus hæc mala si in unum fraternitas esset animata*, saith he, Epist. iv. lib. 4. Ye have heard of the difference between Chrysostom and Epiphanius, and of that between Jerome and Ruffinus, and of that between Ridley and Hooper. In Luther's time, the contest was so hot and great and violent, between him with his party, and Zuinglius, Oecolampadius and others, that though they met together with divers princes for reconciliation; and they did at that meeting draw up several articles of faith, wherein they did all agree, and whereto they did all subscribe; yet Luther would not call the Calvinists, brethren. And in these days of ours, what scuffling is there between brethren, fighting one with another. Why? but because they are in the dark. If brethren fight and scuffle one with another, who will not say they are in the dark?*

A good man may be under some desertion. God may withdraw from him; and when God withdraws, then he is in the dark. Desertion time is a dark time, and such a cloud as this may go over the heads of the best. Surely therefore it is possible that a very good man may be much in the dark.

* Cupio ex hac vita miguare ut liberater ab immunibus et implacabilibus odiis Theologorum. Melanch. Strigellius Melc. Adam.

Et vidi mare vitreum mixtum igni. Apoc. xv. 2.

Quid autem aliud ignis designet, a que servantis lites et contentiones flagrantis odiis! ignem veni missurus in teiram inquit Christus, &c. Hujusmodi ignis vagatur per totam Reformatum Ecclesiam quæ vel absomit plurimos vel molesta est reliquis dum restinguere nituntur. Brightm. in Apoc. xv. 404.

And if a good man may be under some temptation and sin, then he may be in the dark. Temptation time is a dark time. When a man cannot see his own hand, though he lift it up before his eyes, then he is in the dark indeed. Now possibly a good man may be in such a temptation, that he shall not be able to see the lifting-up of his own hand in prayer, saying, I go to prayer, but I cannot pray at all; and that which I do perform, it is no duty. Sometimes it is so with him, that he cannot read his own graces nor see them. Though the fish lie playing upon the water, and you may see them in a fair sunshine; yet in a storm or night ye see them not, though they be in the pond or river still. So here, though when the light of God's countenance doth shine upon the soul, he is then able to see and read his own graces; yet if it be a storm, or the night of temptation, he cannot see them. Why? Not because they are not in his heart and life as before, but because he is in the dark. Possibly therefore a good man may be in the dark, upon a dark ground, and in a dark condition. That is the first thing.

Secondly, Though a good man may be in the dark, yet he hath Scripture light to walk by. God hath not left him comfortless, and without light, in obscure darkness, as the wicked are; but he hath light within him, and that great light of the written word without, "Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed (saith the apostle), as unto a light shining in a dark place." This Scripture light he hath always by him. "To the law and to the testimonies (saith the prophet Isaiah, chap. viii.), if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." It is a dark time which the prophet speaks of, "For many shall stumble and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken," verse 15. "The Lord hideth his face from the house of Jacob," verse 17. "Behold I, and the children whom the Lord hath given me, are for signs and wonders in Israel," verse 18. "And they shall look unto the earth, and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish, and they shall be driven to darkness," verse 22. Yet in this time they have the law and the testimony, that great Scripture light to walk by.

But have not even wicked men this light also of the Scripture, to walk by in their darkness?

I answer, They have it as a blind man hath the sun: the

sun is in the firmament over the head of a blind man, yet it is no light to him. So here.

And though a wicked man doth hear and may read the Scripture, and know many truths which are therein contained, yet he doth not know the greatness of them. A man may know and say, This is the sun, and this is the light thereof; yet not know the greatness of the sun, and that it is abundantly bigger than the earth. So a wicked man may and doth know many truths, but he doth not see and know the greatness of truths, for he prizeth other things of the world above them. A good man knows the truths of the gospel, and he sees the greatness of them, for he leaves all to follow them.

And though a wicked man may have his eyes open to see many truths of the Scripture, yet in seeing, he doth not see the same; for as a good man may know natural things in a spiritual way, so he doth know spiritual things in a natural way. A good man seeth the things themselves that are contained in the Scripture; and therefore it is that the knowledge of Christ, is called Christ: "Till Christ be formed in you," saith the apostle; that is, till the knowledge of Christ be formed. The thing is put for the knowledge of it. Why? Because in knowing, the saints know the things themselves. Wicked men know and have the notion of them; for there is a knowledge of things in the notion of them, which wicked men may have: and there is a knowledge of the things themselves, which the saints and people of God have.*

But may not a good man's eyes be held from this Scripture light?

Yes, in some things; but though his eyes be held, it is only *quo ad hoc*, as to this or that truth in particular. When he is converted and brought home to God, then are his eyes said to be opened, then is he anointed with the unction of the Holy One, and doth know all things necessary unto his salvation. Yet as Hagar's eyes though open, were held from

* Duplex est cognitio rei disciplinaris et intuitiva, disciplinaris est per auditum et narrationem solam intuitiva est illa quam ex re presenti et sensu percepta manantem habemus illam infideles et impii multi assequenter in ipsis fidei mysteriis hanc vero minime, *ω γαρ μη πηρεα ταυλα τυφλες εσι μνωπιαζων.* 2 Pet. i. 9.—Ames. de Lumine Naturæ et Gratix.

seeing the fountain of water that was by her, when she said, "I will not see the death of my child;" so a good man's eyes may be open, yet they may be held *quo ad hoc*, as to this or that truth or way: but though they be held, yet I say it is but *quo ad hoc*, not in regard of all.

Though a good man's eyes may be held from some part of this Scripture light; yet if he be in health, and not under some temptation and spiritual sickness, he doth not shut his own eyes against any Scripture light. A sick man will not endure the opening of the window or casement; but if a man be in health, Set open the window, saith he, that light may come in, though some smoke do come in withal; I will venture and hazard the smoke, for light I must have, and I cannot be without it. So, if a man be in health for his soul, he calls for the opening of the windows: possibly some errors and smoke may come in with light and truth; yet set the windows open, saith he: but if sickly and weak, he is so afraid of errors and smoke, that he dares not endure the means of further light, but even turns his back, and shuts his eyes against some Scripture light; but a good man in health doth not so.

Though a good man's eyes may be held from some Scripture light and truth, insomuch as he may be in the darkness of some ignorance, yet he knows more than he is able to utter, and he feels more than he can speak. A knowing, learned man, it may be, can utter more of the Scripture than he feels; but a good man feels more than he can utter.

And though some Scripture truths may be hidden from him sometimes, yet he hath his intervals of sight. As with a man in travel, when he comes upon such or such an hill or mountain, he sees the steeples and pinnacles of the town which he is going to; then he comes into a valley, and he loseth the sight of them again; then he comes again to another hill, and then he sees them again. So in our journey or travel to heaven, we see such and such truths to-day, then we come into a valley, and we lose the sight of them; then God raises our hearts again, and we see them again. Thus the saints have their intervals of sight.

And though a good man may be in the dark, yet God doth not leave him so. As it is in the darkness of fears, so in all other darkness. Ye read, Matt. xxviii, that when Christ

rose from the dead, the stone was rolled away from the sepulchre, and they that were about it were in great fear. There were keepers of the sepulchre, whom the Jews had set to watch the same; and there were the godly women, waiting for the resurrection: both were in fear, and in great fear. But the angel appears to Mary and the good women, saying, "Fear not ye;" ye seek Jesus, he is risen, he is not here, fear not ye. He did not say so to the wicked soldiers that kept and watched the sepulchre; they feared, and he left them in their fears, and in their dark condition. But the good women feared, and were in a dark condition; but the Lord did not leave them in it, but gave them Scripture light to comfort them: "He is risen, as he said." So that a good man may be in the dark, yet God will not leave him in his darkness, but even then he hath a light, and a sure light to walk by. And that is the second thing.

Thirdly, This Scripture light is the most excellent, safe and sure light: it is the light of lights; the most excellent light of all under God in Christ. For,

It is a true light. There are many false lights in the world, but Scripture light is the true light. The proper work of light is to make manifest: "They will not come to the light (saith our Saviour) lest their deeds be made manifest." Now the light of the Scripture doth manifest things unto us; it is by James compared to a looking-glass. When ye look upon a looking-glass, ye see three things, the glass, yourself, and all the other things, persons, stools or pictures that are in the room. So in looking in the Scripture, this great looking-glass, ye see the truths that are therein contained concerning God and Christ. There is God seen especially, and Christ seen; there also you see yourself, and your own dirty face; there also you see the creatures that are in the room with you, and their emptiness; the emptiness of men, and of all comforts and relations. This is that manifesting light under Christ, that is true light indeed.

As it is a true light, so it is an admirable and wonderful light. For there are the wonderful things of God's law; whereupon David prayed, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may see the wonderful things of thy law." There is the light of Christ, who is called a marvellous light; and the more ye look into the Scripture and know, the more ye will

admire. In other knowledges, the more ye know, the less ye admire; *amor noti, admiratio ignoti*: but in Scripture knowledge, the more light ye have, and the more ye know, the more you will lift up your hands and admire, at your own ignorance and God's grace. It is a most admirable light.

As it is an admirable light, so it is a safe and sure light. Other false lights do lead men into fens and bogs; but we have a more sure and safe light, and the more of it falls upon your eye, the more is your eye preserved. It is not so with outward lights, *vehemens sensibile destruit sensorium*. Your eye is able to bear a moderate light; but if the light be vehement, your sense is not able to bear it, but is destroyed by it. Not so with this Scripture light, the stronger and more vehement it is, the more it doth perfect the eye of your soul; it is not destructive, but it is perfective light. Upon which account Austin prayed to God, *Sint sacre Scripturæ tuæ deliciæ meæ in quibus nec fallere possum nec falli*: O Lord, said he, let thy Holy Scriptures be my delights, by which I can neither deceive nor be deceived. This is that safe and sure light indeed.

As it is a safe and sure light, so it is a pleasant and satisfying light. Light is pleasant to the eye, and the eye ordinarily is not satisfied with seeing: but this is that light which doth bring men to rest; for when a man knows what shall be his portion for ever, then his heart is at rest, and not before. Now it is only the Scripture, and the light thereof, which under Christ doth discover and manifest that unto men. "Stand in the old and good way (saith the prophet), and ye shall find rest." That way is this Scripture way: if a man once depart from the Scripture, he runs from one error to another, and he rests not. But here is rest to be found. This is that satisfying light which doth bring unto rest.

As it is a pleasant, satisfying light; so it is a full and sufficient light, able to make the man of God perfect unto salvation. "The law of the Lord is perfect," Psalm xix; and it makes perfect, else it were no rule of life: for as Austin speaks, the *regula* must be *regulato suo adequata*. Surely therefore it is sufficient to administer help unto all conditions. It is a lanthorn to our feet; whatever ground our feet are on, or in what dark place soever, this light can

find them out. What state can you be in, but the Scripture will find a commandment for your rule, and a promise for your assistance and reward. It is able to reach unto all conditions, for it is a full and sufficient light.

As it is a full and sufficient light, so it is a clear light, a light that shineth; it hath no thief in it, as many lights and candles have: not that there are no hard things therein, and difficulties; where is the man that ever was able to untie all the knots and difficulties of Scripture? * Paul's epistles have their hard things to be understood, even in the eyes of Peter, 2nd epist. iii. 16. Yet what truth is in all the Scripture, which is necessary to salvation, but doth lie plain and clear. "For this commandment which I command thee this day, is not hidden from thee, neither is it afar off; it is not in heaven, &c.; nor is it beyond the sea, &c. But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it," Deut. xxx. 11—14; Rom. x. 6, &c. "Unto you it is given (saith Christ to his disciples) to know the mysteries of the kingdom. If the gospel be hid, it is hid unto them that perish; but we have the mind of Christ," 1 Cor. ii. 16. Surely therefore this light is a clear and a shining light.

As it is a clear light, so it is the best light in the world, the most excellent light, a light beyond all other things which do pretend to light. Seven or eight things there are, in these times, which men do cry up as great lights, whereby many do profess to walk. And those are: 1. Revelations or visions. 2. Dreams. 3. Impressions made upon the heart, with or without a word. 4. Experience. 5. The law and light within. 6. Providence. 7. Reason. 8. Judicial Astrology. But now if you compare these lights with Scripture light, ye shall find that this is that only light which doth exceed them all, and that there is no more light in them than what they do borrow from it.

Instance I. Wherein doth this Scripture light exceed or go beyond revelations or visions, and the light thereof?

This Scripture light, as you have seen, is a full light, a light which did shine forth at once in and by Jesus Christ. Revelations and visions are more particular;

* *Passimur apertis exercemur obscuris, illic fames pellitur hic fastidium.*—Austin.

though God did sometimes speak in that way and manner, yet then he spake drop by drop, *guttatim*; but now he hath in these last days, spoken his full mind by his Son. These were but as the apples which did fall from the tree of wisdom; but in the gospel and Scripture, ye have the whole tree itself. Look therefore what difference there is between the tree, and some particular apple that doth fall from it; so great a difference there is between this and those.

Scripture light is the highest light; Scripture dispensation the highest dispensation: the dispensation of visions and revelations was of a lower rank. When the people of God were in their infancy, they were led much by visions and revelations; that being a dispensation which did most suit with an infant state. And what is the reason that so many christians now do desire visions and revelations, but because they are weak, and upon the return to the law again? The stronger any christian is, the more he doth walk by faith; and the more he doth live by faith, the more he doth choose to walk by the Scripture, the written word of God, the object of faith. It is recorded of Luther, that when he had fasted and prayed a whole day, and then had a vision of Christ, he cried out, and said, Avoid, avoid, thou confounded devil, I know no picture of Christ but the Scripture. Therein is Christ lively pictured, described, and set forth before our eyes: it is not so in revelations and visions.

This Scripture light is a more sure and certain light: for if God should now speak unto you by visions, or visional revelations, how would you know that this were the voice of God, and not a delusion of Satan? Would ye know it by the truth that is spoken; how do ye know the truth but by Scripture? And who doth not know that the devil will speak an hundred truths that he may croud in one lie amongst them.* Or would ye know that it is a true revelation, and not an illusion, by the high things that should be revealed? What greater, higher things, than the things of the gospel? These are the mystery of the kingdom, called the “deep

* *Ditamus preterea quoniam non est humanitus regula generalis, vel ars dabilis ad discernendum semper et infallibilitur quæ veræ sunt et quæ falsæ aut illusoriæ revelationes.*—Gersom. Tract. de distinctione verarum et falsar. visionum. Tom. i. 175, 176, &c.

things of God ;” and says the apostle Paul, “ I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” And how did Satan beguile Eve, but by persuading her to high things, that she should be like to God ? And thus I fear many are beguiled even at this day amongst us. Or would ye know a revelation of God’s from the delusion of Satan by the event, in that some future thing is revealed to you, which doth fall out accordingly ? then read what the Lord says in Deut. xiii. 1 ; “ If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign, or a wonder, and the sign or wonder come to pass, saying, Let us go serve other gods, which thou hast not known ; (verse 2) thou shalt not hearken to the words of that prophet, for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God.” God may suffer a revelation to come to pass, and yet it may not be from the Lord, but to prove you, whether you love him, and will cleave unto him.* Or will ye know a true revelation from a delusion by your taste, *per saporem*, which is said to be the way whereby they did know that thing was of God ? Then what an uncertainty will here be, that your whole salvation shall hang upon, and be ruled by your own taste. But now the written word of the Lord is certain, sure and stedfast ; “ Heaven and earth shall pass, but not one tittle of the word shall pass :” the least apex and tittle of it is more established than the mountains.

There is no danger in tending upon and taking heed to this Scripture light. 1. But if men do attend to revelations and visions, how easily may they be drawn to despise the Scripture, and such as do wait thereon. There were a generation of men, in Luther’s days, that pretended unto great discoveries and revelations ; men of great parts, and of high language ; insomuch as Bucholcerus says of them, That they neither understood themselves nor others, nor others them,

* Sancti autem viri inter illusiones atque revelationes, ipsas visionum voces aut imagines quodam intimo sapore discernunt ut scient vel quid a bono spiritu percipiant vel quid ab illusore patiantur nam si erga hæc mens cauta non fuerit per deceptorem spiritum multis se vanitatibus immergit, qui nonnunquam solet multa predicere, ut ad extremum valeat animam ex una falsitate laqueare.—Gregor. Dialo. Lib. iv.

but were always speaking of revelations, visions, deifications, &c.* As for other men that kept close to the Scripture, they called them vocabulists, literalists, grammaticists, and creaturists. And so now it will be also, if men once do attend, and take heed unto visions, they will easily despise the Scriptures and such as do take heed thereto. Yea, 2. And if men do attend to these visions and revelations, how easily may they be drawn into popery and superstition? How did Mahomet set up his Alcoran? but by persuading the people to attend unto revelation. And how did the papists so much prevail upon the nations of the world? but by their visions and revelations. Search the stories, and you shall find that both the Turkish Alcoran and the popish religion had their foundations here: and if Luther had hearkened to revelations and visions, and not kept close to the Scripture, what had become of his reformation? Nay, but says he, *Pactum feci cum domino Deo meo, &c.* I have made a covenant with the Lord my God, that he may not send me visions, or dreams, or angels; *Contentus enim sum hoc dono, quod habeam Scripturam*: I am content with this gift, that I have the Scripture, which doth abundantly teach and supply all those things that are necessary for this life and for the future. Yea, 3. If a man do once come to attend and take heed unto visions and revelations, how easily may he slide and depart into atheism; for what difference is there between an atheist, or a pagan infidel, and a Christian, but only this, that the Christian is for the Scripture, and doth adhere to that, the other not? Take away the Scripture from me, and there will be little difference between me and an infidel. But now the more a man doth attend unto visions, the more his heart and hands will be loosed from the Scripture. Surely, therefore, there is a danger in this; but Scripture light is a sure and a safe light.

Why but, you will say, may not God speak by extraordinary visions and revelations, in these days of ours?

* Swenckfeldiani sunt ter miseri, nec se nec alios intelligunt, non se que non intelligunt se dicere pugnantia non alios idque non tam naturali sua tarditate ingeniorum quam eo quod tenentur irretiti suis quibusdam enthusiasticis laqueis unde se extricari summum putant impietatem, dementabant multot magnificis istis verbis quæ semper illis in ore illuminatio, revelatio, deificatio hominis interioris et spiritualis, &c.—Sculdet. Annual. an. 1525, pages 269, 270.

Yes, without all doubt he may: God is not to be limited, he may speak in what way he please. If God will, he may say to a man, as he said to Abraham, "Go and offer up thy son Isaac to me:" but is not that commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," a more sure and certain rule for me to walk by? God may, if he will, say to a man as he once said to Hosea, "Go and take thee a wife of fornications:" but is not that commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," a more sure and certain word and rule for me to walk by? What God may do I will not dispute: he may thus speak to men, if it please him; yea, and if we may give credit unto known histories, the Lord hath spoken in this way sometimes to some of his servants since the apostles' time. Cyprian tells us of four revelations, which the Lord gave him, before that persecution did come upon them. Mr. Fox, in the Book of Martyrs, tells us of many visions which one Gallus, a French martyr, had; and of one which Mr. Philpot had: Scultetus also, and Sleiden tell us that God did reveal it to Luther, that there should be no war in Germany whilst he lived. Yet there is a great deal of difference between faith in the promise and a vision or revelation. Possibly, then, the Lord may speak in such a way as this is to some of his servants. But now, that you may have a boundary in this matter,

Though God may thus speak to some of his servants, yet if I have an itching desire after visions and revelations it is ill. The Lord may work a miracle, and being wrought, I am bound to receive it; but I may not put God upon the working of a miracle. So here, if God will speak in this way to me, he may; but I may not put him on it without tempting of him; yea, I am to be so far from desiring God to speak in this way of a vision, as I am bound rather to be backward to it. For as Alvarez observes well,* If a master be abroad in the night, and the servant be backward to open the door unto him, and to let him in, lest some thief should counterfeit his voice; the master will not take it ill at the servant's hands, that he made him stay so long before he did open the door, but will rather commend that servant. So, saith he, though a man be backward to receive these revelations, yet knowing what deceit there is abroad in the world, God will

* *Revelationes caute recipiendas. Alvarez de vita spirituali de discretione spirituum. Lib. v. Cap. 4.*

not take it ill at his hands, but will commend him for it. An itching desire after visions, argues that a man is not content with the Scripture ; and is it not enough for us to see Christ in heaven ? Gersom tells us * of an ancient father, who when the devil did appear to him, in the shape and image of Christ, saying, I am come in person to visit thee, for thou art worthy ; did with both his hands shut his eyes, saying, *Nolo hic Christum videre* ; I will not see Christ here, it is enough for me that I may see him in heaven.

Though God may possibly speak in this way to some of his servants, yet if the revelation be contrary to, or diverse from the Scripture, it is not God's but the devil's ; for says the apostle, " Though we, or an angel from heaven, do preach any other gospel to you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed," Gal. i. 8 ; which he repeats again, and therefore good for us to mark again : " I say now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that which ye have received, let him be accursed," verse 9.

Yea, though the revelation or vision be not contrary to the Scripture, yet if it be brought to try or confirm the doctrine of the gospel, it is not the Lord's ; for the doctrine of the gospel is confirmed already, and that sufficiently. We read, indeed, Heb. ii. 4, that when Peter was at first to go and open a door to the gentiles, then the Lord did appear to him in way of a vision ; but after that truth was confirmed, that the gentiles should be called, then God appeared no more by vision for the confirmation thereof. Now the doctrines of the gospel are all confirmed by miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost ; and therefore if any man have a revelation, to try or confirm any gospel doctrine, it is a delusion of Satan, not a revelation of God.

Though God may sometimes lead a man in extraordinary ways, and work by ways and means extraordinary ; yet if a man's heart be drawn off from the ordinary means by what is extraordinary, it is not right. Mr. Greenham, famous for resolving cases of conscience, being once asked, as his book tells us, Whether there might now be visions, agreeable to

* *Alter sanctorum patrum dum sibi dæmoni transfiguratus in Christum, diceret, Ego sum Christus personaliter te visitans qui dignus es ; confestim clausit oculos utraque manu vociferans, nolo hic Christum videre, satis est ipsum in gloria si videro.*—Gersom. de Probatione Spirituum.

the word? he said, there might be such extraordinary; but, saith he, whoso is moved with them, and not with the word, wherewith he is charged to be moved, and is not drawn the more by the vision to the true means, that man's faith is suspicious. And I pray, what is the reason why the Lord will not have us to believe the prophet, in Deut. xiii., that doth foretell such things as do come to pass? The reason is, because he seeks to turn you to other gods, whom ye have not known; and because he hath spoken to turn you from the Lord your God, and from keeping his commandments. Do I therefore come unto you, and pretend visions and revelations, that I may thereby turn a people from the good ways and ordinances of Christ? then I am a deceiver, and if you receive me, or the pretended revelation, you are deceived also.

Though God did speak to his people of old by visions and revelations, and those were not always examined by the word written; yet now the Lord speaketh nothing to us in this way, but what he will have examined by the word: for says the apostle, "If an angel from heaven preach any other gospel than what I have preached unto you, let him be accursed."* Surely therefore the very revelations are to come under the examination of this word and gospel. And therefore, if there be any revelation that refuses to be examined by the word, it is a thief and a robber, an illusion of Satan, a vagrant, and not sent by God. And if the Scripture be that only *lydius lapis*, that touch-stone, whereby all our gold is to be tried; that light, whereby we are to try all our revelations and visions; then this Scripture light is the more excellent light in compare with the other.

And thus now I have done with the first thing, which doth pretend to much light in these days of ours; namely, visions and revelations. The Second followeth, namely, that of dreams and voices.

* Est autem moneta ista spiritualis revelationis tanquam aurea in quinque principaliter examinanda, scilicet in pondere, in flexibilitate, in configuratione et colore; quantum signum est veritas; est namque sacra Scriptura locus vel officina ubi cunus regius moentis spiritualis reconditur, quod si cum aliquo vel minimo puncto denarius discrepet in suafiguratione, et super Scriptionem ad hoc cunus regis absque ulla dubitatione falsatus est.—Gersom de distincto verat. vision. a fal. page 584, tom. i.

SERMON II.

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."—2 PETER I. 19.

INSTANCE II. As for dreams and voices, the Scripture or the written word of God, is more excellent than those; and the light of Scripture is the best light in compare with any light that may come from them. For,

1. In many dreams there is much vanity. Eccles. v. 7: "In the multitude of dreams, and many words (saith Solomon), there are also divers vanities; but fear thou God."* It seems then that the fear of God doth not consist with these. Here is a check upon our attendance on these: but says the apostle, "Let the word of God dwell in you richly;" there is no check on that.

2. Dreams are uncertain. Some are natural and some are supernatural. It is an hard thing to know whether the dream be natural or supernatural.† In case it be supernatural: supernatural dreams are either diabolical, from the devil; or divine, from God: and it is an hard thing to know whether it be of God, or from Satan. Some think, that if dreams do greatly afflict and trouble the mind with some sharp impression, then they are of God. "Because (says Pilate's wife) I have suffered many things this night in a dream:" and this dream of hers, say they, was of God. But others think rather that it was from Satan, who would have hindered the death of Christ, and so the great work of man's redemption. But if ye look into Job vii. ye shall find that he saith to God, "Thou scarest me with dreams:" yet it was Satan that did it, for as before, when Satan by his in-

* Somnia ne cures nam fallunt somnia plures.

† Gregor. Moral. lib. 8.

Somnia θεο πειρῶντα graviter animos somniantum feriebant, quod divinitus immissorum somniorum est quasi proprium.—Gerard in Gen. cap. xl. p. 705.

Somnia divinitus inspirata vehementer movent somniantem, habent impressiones valde acres, quale fuit Pharaonis, in quo tanta fuit consternatio animi et ἐκλασεν et sentiret esse divinam quandam admonitionem.—Luther in Gen. 31.

Circa cognitionem humanæ mentis duo oportet considerate scil. representationem, rerum et judicium de rebus representatis si cui fiat divinitus representatio aliquarum rerum per similitudines imaginarias non est talis censendus propheta nisi illuminetur ejus mens ad judicandum.—Aquin. 22. q. 173. art. 2.

struments took all from Job, he saith, "The Lord hath taken away;" so here, when Satan vexed and scared him with dreams, he saith to God, acknowledging his providence, "Thou scarest me with dreams:" and yet I say it was Satan, for he was put into Satan's hand, and whatever affliction he met with, it was from Satan and his instruments. So that the trouble and suffering of the dream, doth not argue that it is from God. It is a very hard thing to know whether it be of God, or from Satan. And in case that the dream be of God, yet it is an hard thing to know the meaning and interpretation of it. For Pharaoh had a dream, but all his magicians could not interpret it; that was a work for Joseph. And so, though Nebuchadnezzar had a dream, and that might be of God, yet neither he nor his wise men could tell the interpretation thereof; that was a work for Daniel, the work of a prophet. A wicked man may have a dream from God, but it requires the spirit of no less than a prophet to give the interpretation thereof. But now, are we at such uncertainties in reading the word? Can none but a prophet understand the Scripture? The priests and levites gave the sense of the word to the people ordinarily, yet they were no prophets. The word of the Lord is a light and lanthorn unto all our feet, plain and easy to be understood, in all those things that are absolutely necessary unto our salvation.

But may not God speak unto us by a dream now, if he will?

Without doubt he may, if he please; God is free. But where do we find in Scripture, that dreams are an ordinance of God now, wherein he hath commanded us to wait upon him for the expectance of any mercy?

And if God should speak to me by a dream, yet if I make that a sign of mine own godliness, or of God's love to me, then am I under a delusion; for even wicked men have had their dreams from God, Balaam, and Pharaoh, and Nebuchadnezzar, and others. Do I therefore dream a strange dream, and conclude that therefore I am in God's love, because he thus speaks to me? then am I deceived. What wise man is there in the world, that will or dare lay and venture his soul and salvation upon a dream, or the interpretation of it? But you may and must lay and venture your souls

and salvation upon the Scripture. Surely therefore the light of dreams is not to be compared therewith.

But suppose that I have an immediate voice, is not that to be compared with the Scripture?

An immediate voice, say you. Either that immediate voice is from hell or from heaven: if it come from hell, to report and certify you of the torments thereof, that you may repent of your sins, then hear what our Saviour saith of that in compare with the Scripture: Luke xvi. 31, "They have Moses and the prophets, and if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." And if that voice which you have, do come from heaven, then either it is the voice of an angel or of God himself. If it be the voice of an angel, then see what the apostle saith of that in compare with the word and Scripture: Gal. i. 8, "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed:" and this is that gospel which we have now written in this book of the Galatians. And if the voice which you have do come from God himself, then see what the apostle saith here of that in compare with the Scripture: verse 17, "There came a voice to Christ, from the excellent glory, saying, This is my beloved Son; and this voice which came from heaven, we heard." Verse 19, "And we have also a more sure word of prophesy, which is the written word;" for saith he, "No prophesy of Scripture," &c. So that ye see, this written word of God, or the Scripture, is beyond all dreams and immediate voices. It may be some will say, But may not God speak by an immediate voice to a soul now? To which I answer, What God may do is one thing; and what he doth in the way of a settled ordinance, wherein we are to wait on him and expect from him, is another thing. Ye read in Heb. i. 1, 2, thus: "God who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken by his Son." In time past he spake by visions, dreams and voices. If there be such an ordinance still, wherein we are still to wait on God, why doth the apostle make this difference between times past, and the present time of the Son? Nay, says Luther, but there is such a sufficiency in the Scripture, that though some men should

have visions, dreams and voices; yet the Scripture is so full, that *nec curo, nec desidero*, I neither care for nor desire them. I read of a certain woman, a religious lady of the empress' bed-chamber, whose name was Gregoria, that being much troubled about her salvation, did write to Gregory, that she would never cease importuning him until he had sent her word that he had received a revelation from heaven that she should be saved: to whom he returned this answer, *Rem difficilem postulas, et inutilem*; Thou desirest an hard matter and unprofitable; hard for me to obtain, and unprofitable for thyself to have. And so say I, if any should come to me, desiring to implore God for such a voice, or dream, or revelation; I must answer, Man or woman, thou desirest an hard work for me to do, and a thing unprofitable for thyself to have. Thou hast the Scriptures, go search the Scriptures, wait thou upon God therein; for in them are the words of eternal life: they are a sure and a safe light, more sure, safe and certain, than all revelations, visions, dreams, or immediate voices. And thus I have done with the second instance.

Instance III. As for impressions made upon the soul, whether by a particular word or without it; the Scripture, or the written word of God, is more sure than those; and the light thereof, the best and most excellent light in compare with the light of impressions. For,

1. Impressions, though good, are not our daily food. *Aqua vitæ*, or strong water, is good in a quothing, fainting fit, but it is not good to make it our daily drink. So here, in case the soul be in a fainting fit, it is good to have the impression of some particular word or scripture: but this impression is not daily food; the word of God written is our appointed food, our daily food, whether it come with impression or without impression; this is that food and heritage which under God we must live upon. Ps. cxix. 111.

2. If all that light and comfort which men have from impressions be derived from the word, then the Scripture must be more excellent; for that which makes excellent, is more excellent; that which makes comfortable, is more comfortable. But look whatever light and comfort a man hath from the setting on, or impression of a particular word, is

from the word itself; for if any impression have not the impression and stamp of the word upon it, it is adulterate coin.

3. There may be much danger in walking and living by impressions, whether with or without a word. Good people are very apt and prone to walk and live by impressions, but it is a dangerous thing so to do; thereby some are nursed up in ignorance, and seek for no other knowledge in the study of the Scriptures, by comparing spiritual things with spiritual: thereby some are always kept unsettled in their spiritual state and condition; for if a word come, then they have comfort; but when none come, then doth their comfort fail: thereby also some are misled and carried from the good ways of God and his ordinances; for, I pray, what is the reason that so many, in these days of our's, have departed from the ordinances of Christ, but because they took up truths by impressions, ordinances of Christ by impressions, and the good ways of God by impressions; and so when false impressions came, they presently swallowed them, and have proved apostates; yea, and how many are there, who lie sucking the sweetness of the impression, do lose the sweetness of that very word which is impressed: as with a lamb or child that is sucking; though the child suck the teat or breast for a time, yet if you draw away the breast or teat, and give it a dry finger, it doth suck that. So it is with many; first they suck the sweetness of some particular word that is set on the soul: but when they live and walk by impressions, what do they then but suck the dry finger, the very impression? and so do lose the sweetness of the word itself. But now take the word of God written, and there is no danger in living and walking by it; it is our duty to walk and to live thereby.

But is there no use then of impressions with or without a particular word? Is there no light that doth shine through them?

I answer, Yea, much, for they comfort in time of temptation, desertion or affliction. In case a man be in the dark, and God doth give out some particular word, setting it with power on his soul, it is much comfort to him.

Or in case a man be in some straits, not knowing which way to take. Two ways may be before him, both comfortable, both lawful; yet a man is troubled, and would fain go

that way wherein he may do God most service. If a particular word be set upon his heart, whereby he is inclined one way rather than another, it may be some guide to him.

Or in case that a man doth see his way clear before him, yet knows that he shall meet with many difficulties and much opposition; if now God do give out a particular word to him, it will strengthen his heart and hands much, as in that case of Joshua, chap. i.

But though God do speak much by impressions sometimes, and there is much light and comfort riseth in the soul by them; yet,

If I do make an impression the certain judge of doctrines, then am I much deceived. This is the great privilege of the Scripture, saith the protestant, against the papists, to be the only judge of doctrines and controversies. Indeed God may please to open a place of Scripture to the soul, in the imprinting of it; but to make an impression the certain judge of a doctrine, is without doubt a great error: for where do we find that ever God hath appointed an impression unto this chair. You read of Mr. Fox, that blessed man who wrote the Book of Martyrs, that he had so great and deep an impression made upon his soul, concerning the meaning of a scripture, that he thought he could not be deceived therein. He tells the story twice, once in the 'History of the Ten Persecutions of the Primitive Times,' and once in his Commentary on Rev. xiii. The scripture opened and sensed to him, was verse 5 of that chapter: "And he shall continue forty-two months." Writing, saith he, the story of the ten persecutions, I was so much affected therewith, that I even expostulated with God, why he would suffer his people to suffer such cruel things; and why he would not tell his church and servants when the time of the end of their trouble should be: whereupon, saith he, being in this sad conflict in my own soul, I heard a voice, saith the English relation, but the latin thus; *Sine voce tamen*; only I did not hear a voice, but had *vehementem cogitationis impressionem*, a vehement impression of mind, which whispered thus to me; Oh, thou fool, count these months by Sabbaths, as the weeks of Daniel are counted by Sabbaths; which I did, says he, with the help of some godly merchants, and found the years to be two hundred and ninety-four, just the time of the ten persecutions: doubt-

less, therefore, this is the time of the beast, and herein I was fully satisfied.* Yet this cannot be the true meaning of that text, as is confessed by all hands; for this beast that is to continue forty-two months, doth receive his power from the dragon; therefore it is not the time of the dragon, but the red dragon; that is, the heathen Roman emperor did persecute the woman, Rev. xii. standing before her, to devour the man child, the seed of the church, as soon as she was delivered, verses 2 and 3. Yet this good and holy man thought, that that must needs be the meaning of the forty-two months, because the interpretation came to him with such an impression. Possibly, therefore, a good man may be much deceived by impressions, especially when they come with a particular word. But where do we find in all the Scripture, that we are to judge of doctrines by impressions? No, but by the written word of God; that is the only rule whereby we must judge, comparing spiritual things with spiritual things, and one scripture with another.

Though there may be much comfort found in the way of impressions, especially coming with a word, yet if the word be not set upon the heart, according to the true sense and scope of it, we have cause to fear that the impression is not of God, but an illusion of Satan. For where do we find in Scripture, that ever God did set a word upon the soul, but in the true sense and scope of it? The devil brought a word to Christ, and applied it, not according to the true scope thereof; "Cast thyself down (says he); he shall give his angels charge over thee:" this was not according to the scope of the Scripture. But if God set on a scripture with a deep impression,

* *Nomen illius qui responsum accepit non hic edo, nec opus est: fluctuanti in hunc modum hominis animo multumque secum cogitanti de his rebus, tandem felicior quædam Divini (ut reor) neminis gratia, quæ arcano quodam admonitionis sibilo velut respondens sine voce tamen at non sine vehementi cogitationis impressione, subito in mentem eis suggerit vel increpat potius stulte numera hos menses quem admodum Daniel numerit suas hebdomadas per septenarium numerum annorum, qui anni si rite supputentur faciunt 294, rem ipsam ita ut gesta est vera, simplicique narratione adnotandum duxi, Deus mihi testis nec mentior nec singo nec muto quicquam, nec postulo ut quisquam τείλοισ τοις χρηματιστμενοις, fidem adhibeat nisi velit qui non velit, ipse de sua tripode, adferat meliora, mea quidem ita fert ratio ut credam Christum nec mortuum esse nec mutum, quorsum in ecclesia templum Dei aut in templo oraculum cum propitiatorio si nemo in cælis sit qui in dubiis Scripturæ locis vobis interpellantium respondeat.—Foxus in Apoc. xiii. page 216.*

it was always according to the true sense and scope of the scripture. For example, Nehemiah being at prayer, as ye read chap. i., God gave him a word, with a sweet impression, and it was according to the true sense thereof. So Acts iv; the apostles were at prayer, and God gave a word to them out of the iind Psalm, and it was according to the true scope thereof. Where do we find that ever God did set on a particular word, but according to the true meaning of it? Have I therefore an impression with a word? yet if the word be not set on my soul, according to the true meaning and scope of it, then have I cause to fear that it is rather a delusion of Satan, than the impression of God.

Though the impression be of God, yet if the application be beyond the impression, I am still in an error. There is an impression of a word, and there is the application of it: the impression may be God's, and the application may be mine own. The Lord gave Abraham a word, that his seed should be as the stars; but he made a false application thereof when he went unto Hagar for the fulfilling of that word. So the Lord gave a word to Eliphaz, Job iv. 12, "Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof; fear came upon me and trembling: (verse 14) then a spirit passed before my face, it stood still, but I could not discern it: then I heard a voice, saying, Shall mortal man be more just than God," verse 15. Here was an impression with a word, and this was from God; but he applies this to and against Job, chapter v. 1; the impression was of God, but the application was his own. Possibly, then, a man may have an impression from God with a word, yet the application may be his own; but though the impression be never so full and deep, yet if the application be beyond the impression, he is still in an error. And therefore, seeing that it is an easy thing, and usual, even for the children of Abraham to make application beyond the impression, the safest, surest way, is to keep close to the written word of God, which is both the judge of all our doctrines, and the only rule of all our practices; and therefore above and beyond all impressions, whether with or without a word. And thus I have done with the third instance.

Instance IV. As for that light and law of grace which is

in the saints, the light of the Scripture is beyond and more excellent than that. For,

The light and law within us here is imperfect, for we see but in part, and know in part; 1 Cor. xiii. 9, "Now we see through a glass darkly." And lest any man should think that Paul spake this only of some babes in Christ, he speaketh out yet more expressly, putting himself into the number; verse 12, "Now I know in part;" and this in part is set in opposition to what is perfect, for says he, verse 9, "We know in part, and prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come," &c. verse 10. So that whatever law, or light, or knowledge is within us now is imperfect, but the word of God written, the Scripture and the light thereof, is perfect: for says the Psalmist, "The law of the Lord is perfect," Psalm xix.

The law of grace within, and the light within, is not able to convince others. If I feel a light and law within me, and say, This must needs be so, for I find it thus within me, I have a light within me for it; this will not convince another. But the Scripture, by the breathing of the Spirit of God with it, will convince another, and is able to convince another: Titus i. 9, "Holding fast the faithful word, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convince gainsayers." How are gainsayers to be convinced then? What, by the light or law within? No, but by sound doctrine fetched from the faithful word.

Is there, then, no use of the law, and light, and Spirit within us: doth not God speak and direct thereby?

Yea, "The spirit of a man (saith Solomon) is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward rooms of the belly." When God doth set up a light or candle in the soul, he may thereby go into all the inward chambers of the soul, discovering those heaps of sin that are in the soul.

Yea, This inward law and light doth not only discover evil, but it doth incline to good, and strongly incline the soul thereunto; therefore it is called a law: not because it is a rule to us (for the body of death and sin is called the law in your members), but because of its power and force to incline the soul unto what is good.

Yea, it doth not only incline a man unto what is good, but it enables him thereunto. It is that principle upon which

all his good actions grow, and from whence they spring. All true good must proceed from a good principle; and this law, and light, and Spirit within, is that principle whereby a man is enabled unto what is good. But,

Though the law, and light, and Spirit within us, be a principle of good, yet it is not the rule of our goodness or lives. For,

If the law, and light, and Spirit within, be our rule, then what need the Scripture or the word without any longer? But the Scripture and the word of God written, is a rule still, it is settled in heaven, and doth endure for ever. Psalm cxix. 89, "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." And saith Paul to Timothy, "I charge thee, in the sight of God, that thou keep this commandment until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ," 1st epist. vi. 14. Timothy doth not live in person to the appearing of Christ, but those that succeed him do and shall, unto whom this charge is made. And if ye look into chap. iii. ye find that Paul saith to him, "These things write I to thee, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God:" yet Timothy had a light, and law, and Spirit of God within him. So that though a man have the Spirit, light, and law within him, he is yet to be ruled by the word of God written; the Scripture and the word written is yet to be a rule unto him; and as many as walk according to this rule, peace shall be upon them.

But if the Spirit that is in me, be the same Spirit with that which did write the Scripture, what need I wait on or be ruled by the word without, or the Scripture, any longer?

I answer, Because when the Spirit comes, it takes of the things of Christ, and opens them to you. It is sent to open the Scripture to you, not to take away the Scripture from you; it is not sent to be your rule, but to be your help to understand the rule.

Because, although ye have the same Spirit which did write the Scriptures, yet you have not the same inspiration of the Spirit. All believers in Paul's time had the same Spirit that Paul had, but not the same inspiration of the Spirit; that is very diverse. The apostle speaking of diversities of gifts, 1 Cor. xii. 11, "But (saith he) all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every one as it pleaseth

him." So that though a man have the same Spirit where-with the Scripture was written, yet he may not have the same inspiration. But because people understand not this, therefore they think that if they have the same Spirit, they may lay by the Scripture as to their rule. But,

If the law, and light, and Spirit that is in me, be my rule; then I may do any thing without sin: I may whore, be drunk, steal, or any thing without sin; for it is no sin to do what the rule commands me. And if the Spirit, light, and law within, do command me to do it, it is no sin to me, because my rule commands me to do it, and sin is a transgression of a rule. But the law, light and Spirit may command me to do such things as these, if it be my rule; for it may command any thing but sin, but it cannot be sin if the Spirit do command, for the very commanding of the Spirit takes off the sin of the action, because the rule commands it. Oh, what abominable practices will this doctrine lead a man into, namely, that the law, light and Spirit within, is his rule.

Yea, if the law, and light, and Spirit that is in me, be my rule, then am I my own rule, and so I am God; for he that is his own rule, is God. But if the law, and light, and Spirit within me, be my rule, then am I my own rule; and what is all this but horrid blasphemy? Surely therefore the law and the word without me, is not my rule. Though the law, and light, and Spirit in me, be my principle; yet it is not my rule, that is the word and Scripture only.

Though the law, and light, and Spirit within, be a great help unto us in our way to life, yet it must be tried by the word written; for if it be not tried by the Scripture, then it must be tried by nothing. But, John i. 4, he saith, "Try the spirits, whether they be of God or no." That law, or light, or Spirit within you, is Christ in you; but Christ in you, is to be tried or examined: 2 Cor. xiii. 5, "Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith, prove your own souls; know ye not that Christ is in you, unless ye be reprobates?" And if Christ without us, Christ in the days of his flesh, did submit himself to the trial of the Scriptures, "Search the Scriptures (saith he) for they testify of me;" then surely the Spirit of Christ in us, will not refuse the same: Christ in us, is not more privileged than Christ with-

out us; but Christ without us was tried by the Scriptures, therefore Christ within us much more. And if all that light, and law, and Spirit within us, be to be tried by the Scripture, then surely the light of the word written, is a more excellent light than that light which is within. And thus I have now done with the fourth instance.

Instance V. As for experience, christian experience; the word of God written, and the light thereof, is more excellent than experience, and the light of it, simply considered. For so much light as there is in experience, is borrowed from the Scripture and the word of God written.

It is short of the Scripture; for Scripture light extendeth unto all our actions, a light unto our paths. There is nothing hid from the light thereof, no duty incumbent upon us that is hid from the light thereof. But though I have much experience in this way, yet I may have little or none in another. My experience cannot say, Nothing is hid from me, and from my light.

Though experience be a great help to our faith, yet take it alone, abstracted from the word, and it cannot heal our unbelief. The staff that is in a man's hand, is a good help to him, but it cannot heal his lameness. So is this staff of experience, though it be a good help in my way, yet it cannot heal the lameness of my unbelieving heart; but the word can, and the Scripture doth.

Is there then no use of our experiences? Is there no light therein?

Yea, much, for it bringeth forth hope; experience worketh hope: Rom. v, "Tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, and experience hope," verses 4, 5. Here is the genealogy of hope; but the next parent of hope is experience. "So the poor hath hope," Job v. 16. How so? He counteth up many experiments, and when he hath done, he concludes thus, "So the poor hath hope." It is experience then which doth work hope.

But though experience be the parent of hope, yet it is not the ground of our faith; it is an help unto faith, but not the first ground of our faith. The scripture and the promise under Christ is; Rom. xv. 4, "Whatever things were written afore time, were written for our learning, that we through patience, and comfort of the Scriptures, might have

hope." So that the Scripture and the word of God written, is the first ground of our faith and hope.

And though we have much experience, yet if we do not trust in the word of promise under Christ, over and beyond all our experience, we do evil.

And if all our experience is to be reduced to the word written, then the Scripture is more excellent than all experience; but all our experience is to be reduced unto Scripture. Surely therefore the Scripture, or the word of God written, is more excellent than all experience, and the light thereof. And thus I have done with the fifth instance.

Instance VI. As for divine providence, the Scripture is a more sure light than it. For,

God doth sometimes try us by his providence; he doth sometimes lay a providential dispensation before us, to try and see what we will do. So he led the children of Israel in the wilderness forty years to try them, and to know what they would do, and to humble them. But the Scripture is the rule of our doing, and therefore a more safe and sure light to walk by.

And if the providence of God extendeth unto all our actions, good and evil, and to evil as well as unto what is good; then there is no certain rule or judgment to be made up from thence. Now so it is, that the providence of God extendeth unto all our sins: the Jews crucified Christ, God's providences did extend unto that; "Being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands ye have crucified him," Acts ii. 23. When Jonah fled from God, there was then present a ship that was bound for Tarshish: here was a providence. And when Joseph's brethren sold him into Egypt, there came by certain merchants who did trade into Egypt: here was a providence. Now if the providence of God do thus extend to our very sins, then we cannot make up our judgment, our rule from a bare providence; but you may make up your judgment and rule from the Scripture and the word of God written.

Doth not God speak by providence; guide and direct by providence sometimes?

Yea, he doth sometimes guide us with his eye, as the Psalmist speaks. Thus when the king could not sleep, he called for the records, and found therein that Mordecai had

been faithful to him ; the providential eye of God did guide the king to do something for Mordecai. And when Abraham's servant prayed, and the damsel came forth to meet him according to his prayer, the providence of God did lead and guide to that marriage of Isaac and Rebecca.

But though the Lord doth sometimes guide us with the eye of his providence ; yet if I make the providence of God the rule of lawfulness or unlawfulness, then am I in a great error, and exposed thereby unto all sin ; for then may I say, if I be tempted to kill or murder myself, the providence of God is the rule of lawfulness or unlawfulness. Now here is a knife, a rope, a pond, or an instrument of death, which falls in my way by unexpected providence, therefore I will and must now murder myself. Understand the thing rightly therefore I pray you, thus : In case that two things are before me, and both are lawful ; providence opening a door to one, and shutting the door upon the other, it doth direct to that one, and not to the other. But the providence of God doth not make a thing lawful, which is in itself unlawful. It doth direct us in doing of a thing lawful, but it doth not make a thing lawful ; it is not the rule of lawfulness or unlawfulness. But the Scripture and the word of God is, it is the only rule whereby I may and must make up my judgment of lawfulness and unlawfulness ; it is that only which doth stamp lawfulness upon an action. Surely therefore the light of the Scripture, is more excellent light, than divine providence. And thus I have done with the sixth instance.

Instance VII. As for human reason and the light thereof, Scripture light is more excellent than it. For,

Though human reason be a beam of divine wisdom, yet if it be not enlightened with an higher light of the gospel, it cannot reach unto the things of God as it should ; it is *panis pauperum*, the poor man's bread, compared by some to the dough which the Israelites brought out of Egypt, which was prepared with much labour, and then called *panis pauperum*, Deut. xvi. 3. But the word of God in the Scriptures is compared to manna, called the bread of angels ; for the gospel did come down from heaven in a special manner ; for though reason be the gift of God, yet it doth proceed from God as he is God and general Ruler of the world : but the

gospel, and the light thereof, did proceed from the Father by the Son to the church; Rev. xxii. 1, "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb," John i. 17, 18.*

Though reason be the gift of God, and a beam of the wisdom of God, yet it cannot sufficiently discover a man's sins unto him; not his secret sins, not his original sin, not his sin of unbelief, and against the gospel; but the word of God, the Scripture light, can and doth.

And as mere human reason cannot make a sufficient discovery of sin, so it cannot strengthen against sin and temptation: temptations answered by reason will return again; it cannot convert the soul. "But the word of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul," Psalm xix.

Though the light of reason be good, yet it is not a saving light. How many are there in the world, who have strong reason, yet shall go to hell, and miscarry to all eternity? But the light of the Scripture, gospel light, is saving light. *Surgunt indocti*, said a great bishop and learned man, *et capiunt cælum et nos cum omni doctrina nostra trudemur in infernum*. Poor men arise, and take the kingdom of heaven by force, when we with all our learning are thrust into hell. Why so? The poor receive the gospel; not many wise, not many learned. "Father, I thank thee (saith Christ) thou hast revealed these things to babes." It is revelation light from the gospel that doth bring to heaven: mere human reason cannot do it.

Is there then no use of reason and of the light thereof?

Yea, much, not only in civil things, but in the things of God, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.† Did not Christ himself make use of reason to prove the resurrection: There is a resurrection (saith he), for God is not the God of the dead but of the living. If God be the God of Abraham, then Abraham must rise again; but he is the God of

* Morn. Prefat. Lib de vera relig. Prefat. Lib. de Euch.

Ames. de traductione peccatoris ad vitam et de lumine naturæ et gratiæ. Dr. Voet. de ratione humana de rebus fidei.

Alting. Loc. com. pars i. Loc. 2. dg.

Tunc solum vere Deum cognoscimus quando ipsum esse credimus supra omne id quod de Deo cogitari ab homine possibile est.

Aquin. contra Gent. Lib. i. cap. 5. 6.

† Dr. Voeti. de ratione humana in rebus fidei. p. 5—7.

Abraham, for he is not the God of the dead but of the living.* Here he makes use of reason : so the apostles after him. Surely, therefore, we are not so to adhere to the letter of the scripture, as to deny the use of our reason in finding out the true sense and meaning of the scripture ; for then we must hold with the papists, that the bread in the Lord's supper is turned into the body of Christ, for the letter saith, " This is my body." Reason is of great use, even in the things of God ; and well hath he said, *Contra rationem nemo sobrius* ; Against reason, no man is sober ; against Scripture, no man is a christian ; and against the church, no man is peaceable.† But,

Though there be a good use of reason even in the things of God, yet reason is but the drawer of water, an handmaid ; and therefore if Hagar will perk above her mistress, the Scripture, she must be turned out of doors.‡

And though you do make use of your reason in the things of God, yet if you will not yield unto Scripture truth and gospel truth, until you can see reason for the thing believed, and how in a way of human reason such a thing can be ; then you are in a great error. For as Luther speaks, in the matter of the gospel, we must shut our eyes, and go blindfold into the commandments of God. " The wisdom of the world (saith the apostle) looks upon gospel truths as foolishness : " and as none know the things of a man, but the spirit of man ; so none know the things of God, but the Spirit of God ; therefore not by human reason only. The sun is not seen but by the light of the sun ; nor Christ, but by the light of Christ. This know first, says the apostle in this text, though you do attend to the word of prophecy, yet you must have the Spirit of God, not human reason only. Why ? For as it was written, so it must be understood ; but " all prophecy of Scripture was written by the inspiration of the Spirit, and did not come from man." The schoolmen speak well : Rea-

* *Rationis in Theologia usus*, Alting. pars i. loc. 209.

† *Contra rationem nemo sobrius, contra Scripturam nemo christianus, contra ecclesiam nemo pacificus.*

‡ *Και οτι τα υπερ φυσιν εν τη φυσει γινόμενα καπα την θειαν δυναμιν, αδυνατον κατα τον λογον της φυσεως ποιητα θαι την παρασιν.*—Justin Martyr. Q. 107.

sons before faith lessen and diminish it; after faith they strengthen it.*

Though you do make use of reason in the things of God, yet your very reason is to be mortified, crucified; *Crucifigamus istam pestem, quare*, says Luther; We must crucify that pest and plague. Why? *Deus non vult, non esse quaristas, vel rationistas*; God would not have us that are christians, to be querists or wherefore-ists: naked, simple obedience is best in the eyes of God. With man, says he, we must consider, *Quid*, what it is that is commanded; but in our obedience to God, we must consider, *Quis*, who it is that commandeth. And this is to be the ground of our faith and obedience; as we must renounce our will, so we must deny our reason. But we must not deny the Scripture, nor crucify the Scripture, nor renounce the Scripture. Surely, therefore, the light of the Scripture, and the word written, is beyond and more excellent than all human reason and the light thereof.† And thus I have done with the seventh instance.

Instance VIII. As for judicial astrology. That is another

* *Quid Athenis et Hirosolymis? quid academia et ecclesia? quid hæreticis et christianis? nostra institutio de porticu Salomonis.*—Tertul. de Prescript.

Κι γαρ οισφοδεα μωροι, &c. valde stulti sunt, qui rationibus maxime permittunt quæ non licet invenire nisi per fidem, ex philosophia res divinas velle intelligere est candens ferrum non forcipe sed digitis contrectare.—Chrysostom. 1 Cor. Hom. 5.

Aufer argumenta ubi fides queritur.—Ambros. Lib. de fide. cap. v.

Si quis potest intelligere Deo gratias agat, si non potest non immittat cornua ad ventilandum, sed submittat caput ad venerandum.—Anselm. Ep. de Fide arvo. Pap. cap. ii.

Laudatur maria, quod rationem fide prevenit, et punitur Zacharias quod fidem ratione tantavit.—Bern. Epist. 109.

Rationes precedentes minunt fidem subsequentes augent.

† Dicimus nullam rationem humanam esse principium quo seu per quod aut ex quo seu cur credamus aut fundamentum aut legem aut normam credendorum ex cunis prescripto judecemus, &c. Dr. Voet. de ratione humana in rebus fidei, Disp. Select. pars prima.

Transeundum est e navicula rationis Verulam.

Apud Aristotelem argumentum est ratio rei dubiæ faciens fidem sed apud Christum argumentum est fides faciens rationem.—Altisodoren. pifat. sum.

Si quis idiota tali philosopho qualis Aristot. aut Pythagoras fuit de rerum principiis obstreperet nonne audiret arrogans et insaniens at quanto major est insania, ideo non credere divinæ philosophiæ quod multa non assequatur humanis intellectus.—Erasmus in Symb. Catech.

Tantum abest ut humana ratio fidei sit mensura ut ne naturæ quidem propter ignorantiam et pravitatem esse possit.—Morn. pifat. Lib. de Vera Religione.

thing that is cried up as a great means of light in these dark times of ours. Thereby men will undertake to tell how things may be found that are lost; what persons shall be joined together in marriage; what shall be the issue and end of suits in law and diseases; what ends men shall come to in reference to their lives; and what plagues and mortalities in commonwealths; and what not. This is, I say, this judicial astrology is cried up as a great light in these days of ours, but is, in truth, a work of darkness; for where do we find in Scripture, that God doth command any of his people to attend upon astrologers (or star-gazers, as the word calls them) for any such things as these. We are forbidden to learn the way of the heathen in fearing the signs of heaven; Jer. x. 2, and Deut. xviii. 9, "Thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations." Wherein? Verse 10, "There shall not be found amongst you any that maketh his son to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a necromancer." The observation of times is one of these things. These were the ways of the nations, these things were abomination to the Lord, these things cannot stand with a perfect heart, verse 13, "Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God."

This destroys prophecy; for if a man can foretel future things by the stars, then what need of prophecy? The Lord tells us in the xlviith of Isaiah, that he will bring evil upon his people, which they with all their astrologers should not be able to foresee and hide themselves from: verse 11, "Therefore shall evil come upon thee, and thou shalt not know whence it riseth." No! but we will, might they say, go unto our astrologers. Do so, says God, verse 12, "Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, if so be thou mayest be able to profit:" and verse 13, "Let now the astrologers, the star-gazers, the monthly prognosticators stand up and save thee: behold they shall be as stubble," verse 14. If astrologers and star-gazers can foretel the several changes in states and commonwealths, and what great things shall come to pass therein, and how they come to pass; then why doth God say here, that in spite of all them, thou shalt not know whence this evil comes? verse 11. Surely, therefore, such things as these are not to be read in the book of the heavens.

But is there no light of knowledge to be had from the stars, and do not the heavens teach and declare the Lord's handy-work: will ye condemn all astronomy?

Astronomy? No. There is much difference between astronomy, the lawful knowledge of the stars, and judicial astrology, whereby men would foretel all events. I grant, first, that there is a teaching work in the heavens; "The heavens declare the glory of the Lord," and so do all the creatures; yet this teaching is not able to convert the soul: and therefore when the Psalmist had said in the sixth Psalm, "The heavens declare," &c., he comes to shew where the true converting teaching is to be found, even in the Scriptures; verse 7, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." Secondly, I grant, also, that the stars are for signs; so the word saith, Gen. i. 14, "Let there be lights in the firmament, to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years." But how for signs? Of the weather: as the sun when it setteth with a red sky, foresheweth a fair day to follow. Matt. xvi. 2. Yea, and sometimes they import and are signs of God's displeasure. Luke xxi. 25. Ordinarily they are for signs to know when to sow, and plant, and prune, and reap; and are signs to sail by, for the mariners at sea. Yea, thirdly, I grant that the stars have a great influence upon these sublunary things, even upon the bodies of men and women.

But though the stars have a great influence upon this nether world, are signs of weather, and have a teaching power with them, as all other creatures have; yet if a man shall undertake by the stars, to foretell future events, which are accidental, depending on the wills and actions of men, he doth plainly step into the chair of God. This is God's great prerogative; therefore saith he, Isa. xli. 23, "Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods." Those men, therefore, that will undertake to shew the things that are to come hereafter, would be known to be gods. But though they would be gods themselves, yet why should they not let God be God still? *Qui fatum ponit, Deum tollit*: he that sets up a fate, doth destroy God. And if all things come to pass by influence of the stars (else they cannot pretend to foreknowledge of them), then all things must come to pass by a fate. Yea, what doth this

practice otherwise, than, as Austin observes well,* make God the author of all the sin in the world? For if these astrologers can foretell future things, which depend on the will of man, and that by the stars, then the stars and their influence must be the cause thereof. For as Aquinas observes,† if such a constellation be a sign of an event, then it must be the effect of it, or the cause of it; the effect it cannot be. And if the influence of the stars be the cause of all sinful actions, then God must be the cause of all sin, for he hath made the star, and given it such an influence. This doth so clearly follow, that Austin,* (telling the story of a man's converting from this wicked art) saith, the man did confess that whilst he practised that art, he with others held, that *adulterium non faciebat voluntas propria sed Venus*; a man's own will was not the cause of adultery, but the star Venus; a man's own will was not the cause of murder, but the star Mars. Thus, saith he, doth this art of judicial astrology, lay the sin of all the world upon God himself; and it must needs do so, for

* Multi hoc dicunt, fatum mihi fecit, stellæ me fecerunt, ita jam per circuitum ad Deum volunt pervenire ad Deum accusandum, qui nolunt de compendio venire ad Deum placandum, et dicunt fatum mihi fecit, quid est fatum? stellæ me fecerunt, quid sunt stellæ? certe istæ quas in cælo perspicimus; et quis eas fecit? Deus, qui eas ordinavit? Deus, ergo vides quod voluisti dicere. Deus fecit ut peccarem, ita ille injustus tu justus, quod nisi ille fecisset tu non peccasses, tolle istas excusationes in peccatis memento illius Psalmi. Ne declines cor meum in verba maligna ad excusanda peccata, &c.

Ad hæc magni viri sunt qui defendunt peccata sua, magni sunt qui numerant sydera. Et computant stellas et tempora et dicunt quis quando. Vei peccet vel bene vivat et quando Mars facit homicidium et Venus adulterium magni docti viri videntur in hoc sæculo sed quid ait Psal. Ne declines cor, &c.—Austin in Psal. xxxi.

† Omne corporale signum vel est effectus ejus cujus est signu sicut fumus significat ignem a quo causatur vel est, cum non potest autem dici quod dispositiones cælestium corporum et motus sint effectus futurorum et ventuum, nec possunt reduci in aliquam superiorem rem communem quo sit corporalis &c.—Aquinas. xxii, quest. 95, art. 5.

* Seductus enim ab inimico cum esset fidelis diu mathematicus fuit, seductus, seducens, deceptus, decipiens, illexit sefellit, multa mendacia locutus est, contra Deum qui dedit hominibus potestatem faciendi quod bonum est et non faciendi quod malum est, iste dicebat quod adulterium non faciebat propria voluntas sed Venus justum non faciebat Deus sed Jovis et alia multa sacrilega non parva. quam multis eum putatis Christianis nummus abstulisse! quam multi ab eo emerunt mendacium, &c.—Austin in Psal. lxxi, post tractatum cum mathematicus in populo monstraretur.

the cause of the causes, in things necessarily subordinate, must be the cause of the caused. But can our hearts bear the thoughts of such blasphemies as these? or can we think that a man can tell by the stars, what shall come to pass hereafter, when the Scripture saith, "Who can tell what a day will bring forth?" And Eccles. x. 14, "A man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him, who can tell?" Again, chap. viii. 7, "For he knoweth not that which shall be; for who can tell him when, or how it shall be?" These astrologers do indeed hit the matter sometimes, and have foretold that which hath come to pass, and where such a thing lost may be found again. But I will tell you how; the devil doth assist them therein, and as they erect their scheme, he doth suggest unto them, and leaves his impressions upon their hearts concerning the matter, it being easy for him to make discovery of those things which pass through his own hands. Now because they do not go professedly to the devil, they think that they have nothing to do with the devil; whereas the thing is wholly from the devil, and not from the stars. And is this light then? or is the knowledge of this mystery to be called light? No, it is darkness, and a work of darkness. But the light of the Scripture is a pure light, a clear light, a light without any darkness, a light which doth come from God, and lead us unto God, not unto the devil. Surely, therefore, this light of Scripture is the best light, the most excellent light; more excellent than that of revelations and visions; more excellent than that of dreams and immediate voices; more excellent than that of impressions; more excellent than that of the law and light within; more excellent than that of christian experience, or that of divine providence, or that of human reason; more excellent than this pretended light (but in truth, darkness) of judicial astrology. Surely therefore it is the most excellent, safe and sure light in the world. Shall we then forsake the Scripture, and cleave to pretended lights and lying vanities? No, but if the Scripture be the best light, the most safe and sure light, then it is the duty of all the saints to take heed thereunto, and that especially in their dark times and seasons, which is the fourth general thing propounded. And thus I have done with the third general, namely, That Scripture

light is the most safe, sure, and the best light.* The fourth followeth.

SERMON III.

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."—2 PETER I. 19.

As Scripture light is the most excellent light, the best and most sure light, in compare with all other lights, or whatever may pretend to light; so, Fourthly, it is our duty, the duty of all the saints and people of God, to take heed thereunto, and that especially in their dark times and places; which is the fourth thing propounded to your consideration, and which doth necessarily follow from the former. For if the Scripture, or the written word of God, be our great and most sure light; then it is our duty, the duty of all the saints and people of God, to take heed thereunto, especially in their dark times and places. Yet further, ye shall do well that ye take heed thereunto, for the doctrine of the gospel written is,

1. The word of the Son of God. The more excellent the person is that speaks unto you, the more diligently ye will

* *Occulto instinctu fieri spirituum non bonorum.*—Austin de civit. Dei, lib. v, cap. 7.

Sunt hæc astrorum indicia ex pactis cum dæmonibus et instinctu; eorum occultissimo, quem nescientes humanæ mentes patiuntur.—Austin 2 lib. de Doctr. Christiana.

Et omnes hujusmodi artes vel nugatoriæ vel noxiæ superstitionis ex quadam pestifera societate hominum et dæmonum.—Ibid.

Prima causa istarum predictionum nonnunquam provenit ex pacto et societate quam inivit astrologus cum dæmone vel ex occulto ejus inflatu et instinctu.—Petrus in Genes. cap. i. v. 14, 15. Lib. 2, de astromantia.

Cælum est solum influens generale cujus ratio particularizatur vel singularizatur aut a Deo solo aut a dispositione materiæ, si autem obijcitur quod inveniuntur predicere multa vera respondetur, quod multo plura falsa et ideo vera dicunt vel a casu, vel a multitudine eorum quo dicunt, vel ab observatione eorum quæ audiunt, aut fit ab mixtione operationis dæmonum propter seducendos tam predicentes quam fidem adhibentes in talibus, per damnablem curiositatem sciendi futura et ea quæ pater solus habet in sua potestate.—Gerson pars prima Trilog. Astrolog. Theolog. prop. 11.

take heed unto what he saith. Now the gospel, or the word of God written, is the word of the Son. Some there are who say, that Christ only is called the Word, or the Word of God; and that the doctrine preached or written, is not the word, or the word of God. But though Christ be called the Word, John i, yet I do not find all in the New Testament, that he is called the Word of God for the present: there is a time a coming when he shall be called King of kings, Lord of lords, and the Word of God; but for the present he is called the Word. And if the doctrine preached be not called the word of God, why doth our Saviour say, "The sower went forth to sow, and some fell in the highway, some on stony ground, and some on thorny ground, and the seed is the word of God." Is that Christ? what, doth Christ himself in person fall on the highway ground, and stony ground? and is Christ divided? for the seed is the word of God, and some of it fell on one ground, and some on another: doth Christ himself fall thus? No, but the doctrine preached doth, and therefore that is called the word of God. And if the word written be not called the word of God, what doth the apostle mean when he saith, Rom. ix. 6, "Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect?" doth he mean Christ thereby? No, but he speaketh plainly the word of promise, which is written in the Scriptures. Yea, the whole Scripture is so full of this, that I need not turn to any particular place. The Scripture is every where called the word of God; and if the word of God written be the word of the Son, then we are to take heed thereunto; for says the apostle, Heb. ii, "Therefore ought we to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard; for if the word spoken by angels were stedfast, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?" verses 1, 2, 3.

2. As the Scripture is the word of the Son, so it is the only rule of our lives.* Now that which is the only rule of

* *Scriptura est luserna pedibus, a qua non deflectendum. Ecclesiæ sapientia, cognitionis forma τυπος διδαχης; ejus testimoniis omnia confirmanda ex qua oriuntur demonstrationes. Cui quæ consentiunt admittenda et quæ non consentiunt rejicienda. Ergo est vitæ fideique regula.*—Chamierus, 1 tom. de cano fidei, lib. i, cap. 3, 4, 5, 7, 8—11.

our lives, we are in special manner to take heed unto. But the Scripture, and the word of God written, is the only rule of our lives; for it is a “light unto our feet, and a lanthorn to our paths,” Psalm cxix. It is the wisdom of the church and people of God, Deut. iv. It is that which we may not turn aside from, either to the right-hand or to the left, Deut. xxviii. It is that whereby doctrines are to be rejected or admitted, Acts xvii. It is that which nothing must be added to or taken from, Deut. iv, Rev. xxii. It is that which we are all to have recourse unto for comfort and direction, Isa. viii. “To the law and to the testimony: if men say not so, it is because there is no light in them.” Now if the Scripture, and the word of God written, be a light unto our path, the wisdom of the church and people of God; if it be that whereby doctrines are to be admitted or rejected; if that, from which we may not turn, either to the right or to the left, from which nothing may be taken, and to which nothing may be added; and if it be that which we are to resort continually unto for comfort and direction; then it is the rule, and only rule of our lives. But so it is, as all these fore-mentioned scriptures do plainly prove; and therefore it is the rule and the only rule of our lives.

3. As the Scripture and the word of God written, is the only rule; so it is that salt which doth season all your enjoyments. It is the rule and measure of your worship; for if you do not worship according to the appointments of God in his written word, your worship is but idolatry and superstition: *Superstitio est quicquid est supra statutum*.* It is the great relief of your souls in time of temptation. Hereby Christ answered to all his temptations: It is written; and again, It is written; and again, It is written: and Christ’s practice must be your rule. It is that which sanctifieth all your outward comforts, even amongst the creatures; for says the apostle, 1 Tim. iv. 4, “Every creature of God is good, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word and prayer.” I profess, says Luther,† I cannot live

* Omne quod extra Dei verbum est, est idolatria, omne quod fit in verbo est verus cultus sicut omne quod fit sine fide est peccatum et omne quod fit in fide est bonum opus: quod inter verbum et fidem est conjugium indissolubile.—Luther.

† Anima omnibus rebus carere potest excepto verbo Dei, ego quidem sine

without the written word of God ; I can want any thing but the Scripture or the written word of God. If I were in hell, I could live with a promise ; and though I were in paradise, yet if I had not the word with me, I could not live there. Oh, saith he, the word is so great and deep a treasure, that it doth increase by distributing. Yea, it is even *genus generalissimum omnium bonorum* ; that general good thing under God and Christ, that hath influence into all good things.* And shall the word of God written be such a blessed treasure, and shall we not take heed thereunto ?

4. As it is the salt of all your comforts, so it is, and shall be your judge at the great day. Christ is the only judge then ; but this book of the Scripture, and the word of God written, is that whereby he will judge you, and me, and the world ; for at the last and great day, when men come to be tried for their eternal lives, the books shall be brought out : not one book, but books. Rev. xx. 12, “ And I saw the dead, both small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened, and another book was opened.” It seems then that three books shall be opened at the great day : one book is the book of life ; two other there are ; the book of God’s records, for a book of remembrance is written upon all our actions, Mal. iii. ; and the book of the Scripture, or the word of God : for saith our Saviour, John xii. 48, “ The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.” Now this word that Christ hath spoken, is written ; and therefore men shall be judged thereby. But if the Scripture, and the word of God written, be that book whereby men shall be judged at the last ; then surely it is our duty in special manner to take heed thereunto.

5. As the Scripture is that book whereby we shall all be judged ; so it shall be established upon us, if we be not established by it : for says the apostle, Heb. ii, “ If the word spoken by angels were stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience, received a just recompense of reward ; how

verbo ne in paradiso operatim vivere at cum verbo etiam in inferno facile est vivere.

Est verbum talis thesaurus qui tractando crescit et distribuendo servando autem perir.~ Luther.

* Scriptura est communis animarum officina.—Basil.

Omnipotentis epistola ad homines missa.—Gregory.

τροφή ψυχῆς nutrimentum et cibus animæ.—Athanasius.

shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by his Son?" What then? "Therefore we ought to give the more heed to the things we have heard, lest we let them slip." Why? For if we be unstedfast, yet the word of God is stedfast. The word that God spake by Moses was stedfast, and established upon them that disobeyed; so now, much more, says he, if you be not stedfast and established by the word, it shall be established upon you unto your destruction. Oh, what infinite reason is there then, that we should take heed thereunto.

But the text saith, "That we shall do well to take heed thereunto, until the day dawn, and day-star arise in our hearts:" but the day hath dawned on me, and the day-star hath arisen in my heart; and therefore now, what need I take heed to the Scripture or the written word any longer?

I answer, Yea, still you have need to do it: for did not the day dawn, and the day star arise on the hearts of the apostles and christians in their days, according to your sense and meaning? yet they still attended on the written word of God. Surely, therefore, the meaning of the text is not according to that conjecture. Some therefore would have the words to be read thus: "Until the day star arise on your hearts;" and so think they are spoken of the day of judgment, concerning which time Paul says, 1 Cor. iv. 5, "that Christ will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart." But as ye have heard in the explication of the text, the word *until*, in Scripture phrase, is not always taken exclusively: for example, David saith, Ps. lvii. 1, "My soul trusteth in thee, O God, and in the shadow of thy wings will I trust, until this calamity be overpast."* What, would David trust in God no longer? Yes, but he would do it especially whilst that calamity continued. So in the cxxiiiird Psalm he saith, "Our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until he have mercy upon us." What would they wait on God no longer? Yes, but in their distress especially. So Cant. ii. 16, 17, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine, he feedeth among the lilies, until the day break."

* וְעַד emphatice solet sumi pro וְעַד etiam donec et continuitatem significare seu consecutionem non exceptionem vel exclusionem futuri temporis.—Genebrad. in Psalm cix.

What, doth Christ feed among the lilies no longer ; will he not feed among the lilies after the day break ? Yes, but the word *till*, or *until*, is not always to be taken exclusively. And I will give you but one scripture for it, amongst many in the New Testament, Matt. xii. 20, “ A bruised reed will he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench, until he bring forth judgment unto victory.” What, will Christ break the bruised reed then, and quench the smoking flax after he hath brought judgment to victory ? No, but the word *until*, in Scripture phrase, is not always to be taken exclusively. And so here in this text, “ Ye do well that ye take heed to the word of prophecy, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts :” not that then you should cease taking heed to the word, but because you are now in the dark, now, and now especially ye are to take heed thereunto.*

But why are the saints and people of God to take heed unto the Scripture and the written word of God especially in their dark times and seasons ?

I answer, Because they are then in most danger of stumbling and falling : he that walketh in the dark, stumbleth ; and who is not then apt to fall ? But by taking heed to this sure light, they shall be kept from the power of their darkness. The Scripture tells us of darkness and of the power of darkness. A good man may be in the dark, but he is kept from the power of it by taking heed unto this great and most sure light ; yea, though he be in the darkness of some error, for the greatest errors lie nearest the sweetest truths ; and though he do not see that truth for the present, yet, if he do take heed unto the word, the sweetness of that truth shall ooze through the error, and preserve and keep him from the power of it. But if ye look into 2 Tim. iii., ye shall find the apostle doth inform Timothy of very sad and dark times, that shall be in the latter days : verse 1, “ In the last days, perilous times shall come.” 1. He tells him wherein the peril of these times shall consist. 2. He tells him the signs thereof. 3. He comforts him under it. 4. He shews how he and we may be kept from the power of that darkness : “ In the last days, perilous times shall come ; for (saith he) men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, boasters, proud,

* Hac enim particulari γγ donec Scriptura atque adeo lingua Hebraica affirmat quod in dubitationem possit incidere.—Genebrad. in Psalm cix.

blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, having a form of godliness," &c. verses 2—5. It seems, then, that men may be thus wicked, yet may bear up to a form of godliness. 2. He tells Timothy the signs of these perilous times, and who these persons are; "Such as creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with divers lusts; (verse 6) who also shall resist the truth in the ministry, as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses," verse 8. 3. He comforts him against the evil of these dark times; verse 9, "But they shall proceed no further, for their folly or madness shall be manifest to all men." 4. He directs him, and us by him, how to stand and hold fast, verse 14, and that is two ways: First, by avoiding and turning away from these corrupt men: verse 5, "From such turn away," speak not to them or with them; go not to them, but turn away from them. Secondly, By taking heed to the word of God preached and written: verse 14, "But continue thou in the things that thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them, and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise to salvation." So that here the apostle doth refer him both to the word preached and written; as if he should say, The only way to be kept from seducers (verse 13, "men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith,") is to take heed unto the Scripture. And indeed, what is the reason that so many in these days of ours are deceived, but because they do not take heed unto this great and most sure light. This is that great and most excellent light which we are to take heed unto at all times, but especially in our dark times and places, and thus we shall be preserved.

But if this be such a preservative against the power of darkness, why then are so many men in the dark, who do not run to Scripture? What heretic is there, or ever was, who did not plead and lay claim to Scripture?

I answer, All heretics do not lay claim to Scripture: some deny the Scripture, some do not: some, as Theodoret observes of the heretics in his time, will make use of those scriptures which seem to make for them, but as for those scriptures which are plainly against them they reject, and if

close pressed, will deny the very body of the Scripture as any rule to them.*

But it is one thing to cite Scripture and another thing to take heed thereunto. The devil cited Scripture to our Saviour Christ, but he did not take heed unto it as to his rule of life. If we take heed thereto, then we shall be kept and preserved by it, even from the power of that darkness which we may labour under. And thus now I have done with the fourth general thing propounded, and have cleared the doctrine.

If this doctrine be true, then what cause have we to bless God and not to despise human learning. Mistake not, I shall not go about to preach up human learning in the church of God; but though I do not preach up the excellency of meat, drink and clothing, or outward blessings, yet I may call upon you and myself not to despise the same, but to bless God for them. So though I do not preach up the excellency of human learning, yet I may call upon you and myself not to despise the same, but to bless God for it. For if Scripture light be so excellent a light, and the word of God written, that whereunto we are all to take heed; then what a mercy and blessing is it, that this word and Scripture is translated into the English tongue. It was not first written in English, but in Hebrew and Greek; it could not have been brought forth into English, but by the help of human learning; and will ye then despise human learning, and not bless God for it? Oh, ye wanton hearts, remember how the poor martyrs in Queen Mary's time, did bless God for the English translation; and how could that be without human learning? Then let us bless God for it, and not despise it.

If this doctrine be true, namely, that Scripture light is so great a light, which all are to take heed unto; then what a sad condition are those in, who do deny and forsake the Scripture? they are in the dark indeed. I confess a good man may be tempted, as to other sins, so to this, to doubt of the truth of the Scripture. But do I hear a man that hath been a professor, one that hath known God and his

* *Οταν ειδωσι μεν την εαυτων κφεοφροσυνην. Si videant petitis e Scripturæ demonstrationibus stultitiam suam constringi, tum Scripturæ recusant et scopum et usum; si quando vero putant sibi favere nudum aliquod effatum a genuina recisum orationis serie ad suum propositum accommodant suis confirmandis.—Theod. Opus. contra Hereses quæ sunt, in 2 tom. oper. Athanas.*

ways, one that is under no temptation ; do I hear such an one denying the Scripture as any rule to him ? Write that man childless, write him faithless, without Christ, and without God in this world. Ah, poor soul, here is one whose foundations are plucked up, twice dead, plucked up by the roots. Oh, the sad condition of this poor creature, he hath forsaken the light, and now is under the power of darkness. Whither should he go, for he hath left the words of eternal life ? yet, Lord, how many have these times brought forth, that are come to this height of wickedness ! But, beloved, I do not only hope, but am assured better things of you ; only hear the word of exhortation, and that is,

Take heed and attend to the Scriptures, for they are our great and most sure light, whereunto ye do well if ye take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place. Oh, then take heed thereunto.

What must we do, that we may take heed and attend unto Scripture ?

Ye must do three things. I. Ye must attend to know and understand it. II. Ye must attend to keep it. And, III. Ye must attend to walk by the same. And,

I. For your knowledge in and understanding of the Scripture, and the written word of God, ye must,

1. Observe, keep, and hold fast the letter of it ; for though the letter of the Scripture be not the word alone, yet the letter with the true sense and meaning of it, is the word. The body of a man is not the man ; but the body and soul together, make up the whole man : the soul alone or the body alone is not the man. So here, though the letter of the Scripture alone, do not make up the word ; yet the letter and sense together do. And if ye destroy the body, ye destroy the man ; so if ye destroy the letter of the Scripture, you do destroy the Scripture : and if you deny the letter, how is it possible that you should attain to the true sense thereof, when the sense lies wrapped up in the letters and the words thereof ? *

But if I attend to the letter in my practice, then I shall be a professor of the letter ; and if a preacher do attend to the letter, then he shall be a minister of the letter.

* און &c. בחורח in lego sine Scripturis non est litera a qua non pendent magni montes doctrinarum.—Rabbini.

Not so. For when the apostle saith, "We are not ministers of the letter, but of the Spirit;" his meaning plainly there, is, not of the law, but of the gospel; for in that 2 Cor. iii. he calls the ministration of the law, the letter; and the whole ministration of the gospel, the Spirit. Those therefore that preach or walk according to the ministration of the law, are ministers and professors of the letter; those that preach or walk according to the ministration of the gospel, are ministers and professors of the Spirit: and therefore those that depart from and despise the ministration of the gospel, do depart from and do despite to the Spirit. It is one thing for a man to keep the letter of the Scripture, so as not to deny the same; another thing to keep to the letter only for the meaning of it. It is one thing to preach from the letter, another thing to preach the letter. Our Lord and Saviour Christ, when he expounded that Isa. lxi., as ye read Luke iv., did not preach the letter, yet he preached from the letter. So now, we may preach from the letter of the Scripture, yet not preach the letter, or be ministers of the letter; and you may practise the word from the letter of the Scripture, and yet not be professors of the letter, that is, of the law, and the ministration of it.

How can we hold and keep fast the letter of the Scripture, when there are so many Greek copies of the New Testament, and those diverse one from another?

Yes, well; for though there are many received copies of the New Testament, yet there is no material difference between them. The four Evangelists do vary in the relation of the same thing; yet because there is no contradiction, or material variation, we do adhere to all of them, and deny none. In the times of the Jews, before Christ, they had but one original of the Old Testament, yet that hath several readings: there is a marginal reading, and a line reading, and they differ no less than eight hundred times the one from the other; yet the Jews did adhere to both, and denied neither. Why? Because there was no material difference. And so now, though there be many copies of the New Testament, yet seeing there is no material difference between them, we may adhere to all: for whoever will understand the Scripture, must be sure to keep and hold fast the letter, not denying it.

2. If you would have the true knowledge, and understand the Scripture, and so behold this great light in its full glory and brightness; you must diligently inquire into the true sense and meaning of it, for the true sense and meaning is the soul thereof. Now the Scripture, or the word of God written, may be expounded; for Ezra stood up before the people in a pulpit, and gave the sense of the Scripture. Christ himself is said to expound: and 2 Peter i. 20, "No scripture is of any private interpretation." The word *ἐπιλυπε* signifies, exposition; it is the same word that is used in Luke iv., "Christ stood up, and expounded." Now, saith the apostle, "No Scripture is of any private exposition;" therefore it may be expounded. And if not, why were gifts given to men by the ascension of Christ? It is a very dangerous thing to bear false witness against the truth of Christ. Now if a man do not take heed unto the true sense and meaning of the Scripture, but will rigidly adhere to the letter of the Scripture, he may quickly bear false witness against the truth. Mark xiv. 56, it is said, "that many did bear false witness against Christ, but their witness agreed not together." But how did they bear false witness? They testified that Christ said, "I can destroy the temple of God, and build it again in three days;" which our Saviour Christ spake of his body, they applied to the temple of the Jews, and so they are said to bear false witness. Why? Because they kept to his words only, and not to his sense and meaning. So that we had need take heed how we report the words of Christ; though we do adhere to his words, yet if we keep not to his meaning, we shall be found false witnesses against him and his truth. "Search the Scriptures," saith our Saviour: why search? even because the sense and meaning doth lie deep. And therefore it is not enough for us that we do adhere to the words, but we must diligently inquire into the true sense and the meaning of them.

But one Scripture hath many senses; a literal sense, and a spiritual sense; a literal sense, and a mystical. How shall we be able then, to find out the true sense and the meaning of it?

Nay, but the same Scripture hath but one entire sense. Indeed Papists tell us, that one Scripture hath many senses;*

* *Excipiendus est Michael Modina,*

but the Protestants hold, that there is but one entire sense of a Scripture, though divers applications of it. As for example, the Old Testament says, "Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox;" which the apostle applies to the maintenance of the ministers. The sense is but one in divers parts, thus: as the mouth of the ox is not to be muzzled, so ministry is to be maintained. There is but one whole sense of a scripture, though divers parts and applications of it.

Though the sense of the Scripture be but one entire sense, yet sometimes the Scripture is to be understood literally, sometimes figuratively and metaphorically; but always spiritually, for when it is taken literally, it is taken spiritually: for, says the apostle, "If thy brother offend thee, heap coals of fire upon his head;" that is not to be taken literally, but metaphorically. So when our Saviour saith, "If thine eye, or hand, or foot offend thee, pull it out, and cut it off;" this is not to be understood literally, but metaphorically.

Though the Scripture be applied mystically sometimes, and doth receive a mystical application; yet for your direction herein, ye must know,

That there is no fundamental doctrine of our salvation, but is laid down plainly and without mysticalness: the covenants of the law, "Thou shalt have no other god but me;" and, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" faith in Christ, and love to our neighbour: all the fundamental doctrines of our salvation are laid down plainly and literally.

Though the great matters of our salvation be expressed plainly and literally, yet if the literal sense of any scripture be contrary to common sense or reason, or to modesty, honesty and good manners, then we are to balk the literal sense: for example, our Saviour saith, "This is my body," in the Lord's supper; if these words be taken literally, it is against common sense and reason; therefore you must balk the literal sense, and understand them otherwise. Again, the Lord commanded the prophet to go naked; if this be understood literally, it would be against common modesty. So when our Saviour saith, "If thine eye offend thee, pull it out; if thine hand offend thee, cut it off:" if this be understood literally, it would fight with that commandment, "Thou shalt

not kill:" therefore the literal sense is sometimes to be balked.

Though we are not always to adhere to the bare letter for the meaning of the words, yet if the words be applied mystically, ye are not to make a force upon the history; mystery doth not destroy the history. The history of the two women Hagar and Sarah, is by the apostle applied to the two Testaments; yet this doth not destroy the history; for as words are the substractum of the history, so history is the substractum of the mystery. Some, when they have attained to the mystical application, do deny the history; but remember, that though the words of the Scripture be applied mystically, yet the mystery is never to destroy the history.*

And though the words of Scripture be sometimes applied mystically, yet you must know that there is nothing mystical in one scripture but is literally set down in another scripture. Let any man shew me any truth set down mystically in one place, but I will shew it literally expressed in another. Some would have all the Scripture to be understood mystically; but doth any man tell you that this and that scripture is not literally but mystically to be understood, then let him shew you where the same truth is set down literally in another place, else you may not believe him: and if you walk by this rule and rules, you shall walk safely here, and in some good measure be helped to the true sense and meaning of the Scripture in this case.†

But suppose that a scripture lie under controversy: one lays claim to it for his opinion, and another lays claim to it for his opinion; how shall I be able to understand the true sense and meaning of it? Or suppose I be in the dark, in a

* In interpretatione Scripturæ sacræ illud apprime observandum est ne ulla vis inferatur literalī.—August. de quiv. Disput. de sensu Scripturæ.

Verborum sacræ Scripturæ Germana intelligentia imprimis quærenda et instituenda, non quod tropo logicum intelligentia condemnemus sed quod spiritualis interpretatio sequi debet ordinem historiæ, quod plerique ignorantes, lymphatico in sacra Scriptura vagantur errore.—Hieronym. in cap. xiii. Isa.

† Quis autem non impudentissime nitatur aliquid quod in allegoria positum est, per se interpretari nisi et manifesta habeat testimonia quorum lumine illustrantur obscura.—Austin. Epist. 48, ad Vincent. Donat.

Si animus est allegoriam texere vide imprimis, ut interpretationis ejus quam meditaris sententia alibi in Scripturis clare et absque tropo expresso inveniat atque detracto velamine analogiæ fidei respondeat.—Flac. Illyric. pars altera Tract. i. de ratione cognoscendi Scripturas, observ. 2.

dark estate and condition, how shall I so take heed unto the scripture that I may know and understand the same ?

I answer, Something you must do by way of observation ; something by way of practice.

As for observation, in case you be able, you must consult the original ; for as old Mr. Dod once answered to a young man enquiring of him what was the best commentary upon the Scripture ; The original, the Hebrew and the Greek text, said he, is the best commentary. So say I ; the very text in the original doth sometimes put an end to the controversy. As for example, the apostle saith of women, “ They shall be saved by child-bearing ; ” which some books read thus, “ They shall be saved by bearing of children : ” whereupon a controversy arises, whether those followings words, “ If they continue in the faith, ” do relate to children or to women ; whereas if men looked into the original, they should find that the word is but one, in the singular, according to our translation, “ They shall be saved by child-bearing, ” * and therefore the following words must relate unto women. Therefore it is good to consult with the original ; and though you cannot understand Hebrew or Greek, yet you may consult with the original, and not pin your faith upon another’s learning : for if you ask three or four how such or such a verse should be translated, and they do all agree in their translation for the substance, you know that so it is in the original, not because such a man doth say so, but because of their agreement, which could not be, if it were not so in truth.

If you would understand the true sense and meaning of a controverted scripture, then look well into the coherence, the scope, and the context thereof ; for as the Hebrew Rabbin says well, There is no objection can arise upon the text, but there is an answer in the sides thereof : † for example, the papists urge that place of the iind of James for justification

* *Δια της τεκνογονιας των μελωνων*, &c. per filiorum generationem, si manserint.—Montanus.

Per natos suos, si manserint.—Syriac.

† Nulla est objectio in lege, quæ non habet solutionem in latere.

Turpe est de lege judicare tota lege nondum inspecta.

Quis, scopus, impellens, sedes, tempusque, locusque.

Et modus hæc septem Scripturæ attendito lector.

Vide Explicat. in Glass. Philog. Sacr. Lib. ii. p. 2, de Scripturæ sensu emendo, page 503.

by works ; whereas if we look diligently into the coherence and the scope thereof, we shall find that the apostle speaks of the work of faith in opposition to the profession of faith, for says he, verse 14, “ What will it profit, my brethren, if a man say he have faith, and have not works, will it save him ? If a brother or sister be naked, and in want (verse 15), and one of you say, Depart in peace, and be warmed and filled ; if you give him not what is good for the body, what doth it profit ? Even so faith if it have not works is dead.” A man may say he hath faith ; but the devils say and believe there is one God. Was not Abraham justified by works when he offered Isaac ? That faith that justified Abraham was not a bare profession of faith, but it was a working faith ; the profession of faith alone doth not justify, but it is a faith which consists in a work, it is a working faith : this is the scope of the place then, as appears by the coherence. If a scripture, therefore, do lie under controversy, take you the Bible, and look well unto the scope and the coherence of the text controverted.

If you would understand the Scripture rightly, then compare one Scripture with another ; for, says the apostle, “ No Scripture is of private interpretation ; or rather thus, no Scripture is of our own exposition, *την ιδίαν επιλυσεως* ; “ But holy men of God wrote it as they were inspired by the Holy Ghost.” Is the Scripture therefore doubtful in one place ? then compare it with another ; stand not upon your own apprehension, for it is not of our own exposition. It came not by the will of man, but divers holy men wrote it as they were inspired with the Holy Ghost ; and therefore if one place be doubtful, it is to be compared with another.

And be sure that you swerve not from the proportion of faith ; for says the apostle, Rom. xii, “ Or if any man prophesy, let it be according to the proportion or analogy of faith.” And what is that, but the sum and grounds of religion, or the body of divinity, which is delivered to us in the form of sound words, whereunto we are delivered. Thus in case the Scripture lie under any controversy, it will be good for you to observe these rules.

II. But secondly, and more practically : if you would so understand the Scripture, that you may take heed thereunto, as to a light shining in your dark state, then—

You must go to God for the Spirit; for without it, ye cannot understand the mind of God in the Scripture: no man knows the mind of Paul, but by the Spirit of Paul; nor the mind of Peter, but by the Spirit of Peter; no man knows the mind of Christ, but by the Spirit of Christ: stand therefore under gospel dispensations, where the Spirit breathes. So says the apostle, "Received ye the Spirit by the law, or by the hearing of faith?" And seeing God hath promised to give this Spirit unto them that ask it, go unto God for the same.*

Take heed of a worldly, fleshly mind; fleshly sins do exceedingly blind the mind from the things of God; and a worldly mind cannot savour them. Ye see how it is in the eclipse of the moon, when the earth comes between the sun and the moon, then the moon is eclipsed, because the earth keeps the light of the sun from it. So if the earth and the world, come between you and the truth, there will be an eclipse, and darkness upon all your soul: "Then shall ye know (saith our Saviour) of my doctrine, whether it be of God, if ye do what I command you." Those that will not do what they know, shall not know what to do.†

Study your condition by the Scripture, and the Scripture by your condition; condition gives understanding.‡ In case you be under a temptation, study those scriptures that do concern such temptation; if you be in an affliction, study those scriptures that do concern such afflictions; if you be in a desertion, study those scriptures which do concern such desertions: and whatever your condition be, study those scriptures which do concern your condition, and this will help you to understand the scriptures.

Yet take heed that you be not too indulgent to your own

* Quo spiritu Scripturæ factæ sunt eo spiritu legendæ, nunquam ingredieris in sensum Pauli, nisi spiritum Pauli imbiberis.

Omnia dona a Deo Patre luminum.

Christi munus est aperire Scripturas, Luc. 24. Spiritus sanctus author simul et Explicator Scripturæ. John xvi.

† Perfectio intellectualis operationis in homine consistit in quadam abstractione a sensibilibus phantasmatis et ideo quando intellectus hominis, magis fuerit liber ab ejusmodi phantasmatis, tanto potius considerare intelligibilia poterit.— Ergo.

Habitudo sensus circa intelligentiam oritur ex gula cæcitas mentis ex luxuria. Aquin. 22. Q. 15. A. 3.

Cum non faciunt quæ intelligunt non intelligunt quæ faciunt.

‡ Condicio dat Intellectum.

condition, disposition, or opinion. It is a good speech of Hilary;* he is the best interpreter of scripture, that doth rather bring his sense from the scripture, than carry his sense to the scripture. We are very apt to interpret scripture according to our own opinion or disposition. Interpretation ordinarily follows disposition, or opinion: as when there was a great controversy in the Popish church, betwixt the two liturgies of Ambrose and Gregory; by common consent of both parties, it was agreed, that both the mass books should be laid on the altar, expecting the decision of the matter by revelation: and the doors being opened the next morning, Gregory's mass book was rent and torn in many pieces, and scattered abroad in the place; but Ambrose's lay whole, and open upon the altar, which some thought signified thus much; that Gregory's mass-book should be cancelled; others, as the Pope himself, said, Nay, but this renting and scattering of the leaves, signified the dispersing of it over all the Christian world. Thus men interpret things, according to their own dispositions and opinions, even when they come to Scripture also. Would you therefore see clearly into the mind of God in the scripture? then, as when you come to Christ for righteousness, ye come with naked shoulders; so when you come to the truth of Christ, take heed of your own disposition and opinion: you must come to Christ as a prophet, as well as to Christ as a priest, with naked shoulders.

If you do desire so to understand the scripture, as it may be a light to all your paths; then be sure that you put nothing else in commission with it for your rule. It is with the scripture in this respect, as with God, Christ, and the Spirit; if you come to God for help, yet if you join another god in commission with him, he will not give down his help: so if you join any thing with Christ in the matter of mediation, though you come to him, he will not give in the comfort of his mediation to you: so for the Spirit, though you come unto him for comfort, being the Comforter; yet if you join any thing else in commission with the Spirit, it will not give down his comfort. And so here: though you come, and tend, and wait upon God in the Scripture; yet if there be any thing else which you do make your joint rule with the

* *Optimus Scripturæ interpres hic est, qui sensum e Scriptura potius retulerit, quam attulerit.*—Hilar.

scripture, any light within you, or precept of man without you, it will not give down its light to you, but you will be left in the dark. Do you desire therefore, to understand and know the true sense and meaning of the scripture? then take heed that you join no other thing in commission with it, as to the matter of your rule. And thus I have done with the first thing that we must do in taking heed to the scripture; we must take heed to know and understand the same.

If you would so take heed unto the scripture, as it may be indeed a light unto you in a dark place, then you must keep it; for though the meat be never so good, yet if the stomach throw it up presently, and do not keep it, it doth the man no good. So in regard of the scripture: therefore saith the apostle, Heb. ii. 1., "We ought to take the more earnest heed unto the things that we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip, or run out:" we must keep what we have, we must keep what we know, else we do not take heed word.

Now that may keep, and not forsake the word,

1. Observe what those things are, whereby men have been led off, and carried away from the Scripture, and above all things take heed of them. Now those are three especially.

Sometimes this evil doth arise from the corruptions of a man's nature, boiled up to a secret unperceived malice against the word and Scripture. As in case two professors be at variance, and a third person stand by and saith, Do you see these professors, what proud, wrangling people these are, they are all such; doth not this argue, that this third man hath an aching tooth at profession? So when men shall observe some variations in Scripture, and they shall say, do ye see what contradictions there are? they are all so. What doth this argue, but that these men have an aching tooth, and secret malice at the good word of God, or the Scripture. You know how it was with Moses, when he saw two men fighting, one an Egyptian, and another an Israelite, he killed the Egyptian; but when he saw two Hebrews fighting, now, saith he, will I go and reconcile them, for they are brethren; why so, but because he was a good man, and gracious? So also it is with a gracious heart; when he sees the Scripture fighting with an Egyptian, an heathen author, or apocryphal, he comes and kills the heathen, he kills the Egyptian, or the

apocrypha: but when he sees two Scriptures at variance (in view, though in truth not) Oh, saith he, these are brethren, and they may be reconciled, I will labour all I can to reconcile them; but when a man shall take every advantage of seeming difference in Scripture, to say, Do ye see what contradictions there are in this book, and not labour to reconcile them; what doth this argue, but that the corruption of a man's nature, is boiled up to an unknown malice against the word of the Lord: take heed therefore of that.

Sometimes this evil of denying, and forsaking the Scripture, doth arise from corrupt principles, which have been bred up in the minds of men, as sometimes men think that the light and law within them, is their rule; and therefore what need the Scripture as my rule any longer? Sometimes men think that all Scripture is to be expounded mystically, and so, first they make a nose of wax of it, and then they cast it away. Sometimes men think that they are to judge of doctrines by impressions, visions, voices, and dreams, and so they cast away the Scripture. Would ye therefore take heed unto the word, so as to keep the same; take heed of this ill principle.*

Sometimes this evil doth arise from dalliance, and playing about the borders and confines of this sin: it is in this sin, as with other sins; though a man hate and abhor swearing, drunkenness, and adultery; yet if he lie playing and dallying upon the borders thereof he will surely fall into them. So, though I say, God forbid that ever I should deny the Scripture, yet if I lay playing upon the confines of this sin, I shall certainly fall into it. It is an excellent speech that Luther hath, Will any man play? let him play with his wife, play with his children, play with his money; but let him take heed how he plays with the Scripture, by turning all

* Donatistæ jactantes veram Ecclesiam penes se solos esse qui habitabant regionem meridionalem ad id confirmandum adducebant illud Canticorum, 1. v. 6. Judica mihi (quem diligit anima mea) ubi pascas, ubi cubes in meridie ne vagari incipiam post greges sodalium tuorem; si ita (inquit Aug. Epist. 43.) exponendam putatis sacram Scripturam Aquilonares profecto Ecclesiæ dicent se solas esse veras, adducent enim per se illud Pf. 47. 3. Exulta mons Sion lætera Aquilonis civitas Regis magni, Deus in domibus ejus cognoscitur cum suscipiet eam, ergo in expositione Sacrarum Scripturarum ante omnia inveniendus est sensus literalis eo namque constituto facilis ad mysticos sensus patebit aditus clypeus Concionat. Verbi Dei per Ferdinand de Escalante Lib. i. cap. 17.

into mysticalness; for who is it that dares play with the thunder? Why? (says he) for it is the voice of God. So is the Scripture, it is the voice of God. Would ye therefore, so take heed unto it, as to keep it, and not deny the same? Then take heed of that corruption of nature which doth boil up to malice; take heed of evil principles about the rule of your life; and take heed of playing with Scripture, and of living upon the confines of that great sin of denying it, lest God in just judgment, give you up at last to the gross evil of it.

2. And for particular truths of the Scripture, that you may keep them in your heart and judgment, consider,—

Whether that doctrine, which you are now about to deny be not that doctrine which hath seven times passed through the fire in the sufferings of the saints? whether it be not that doctrine which many saints have lost their estates, liberties, and their blood for? And if it be so, then think with yourself, how hard a thing it will be for you to be saved, denying that truth which so many have shed their blood for.

Consider also, whether the doctrine you are now about to deny, be not that doctrine which the saints generally have maintained in opposition to the world? And if it be, then think with yourself how hard a thing it will be for you to be saved, denying that doctrine which all the saints generally have maintained against the world: but above all, take heed of an itching ear. The apostle tells Timothy, 2 Epist. iv. 3. “That the times should come, wherein men will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own wills, shall heap up to themselves, teachers, having itching ears,” such as shall not be contented with the settled ministry of God’s appointment, but shall, after their own wills, heap up teachers to themselves; and this they shall do from the itch of the ear: well but what shall this itch in the ear bring forth? verse 4. “They shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” Now therefore, that you may keep, and hold fast the word in the particular doctrines, oh, then take heed of this itching ear.

III. Yet one thing more. If you would take heed to the Scripture, you must so heed the same, as you may walk thereby.

Therefore prize it much: who takes heed to that which he

does not prize? The martyrs in queen Mary's days, prized the written word of God much : one gave a cart load of hay for one leaf of the Bible in English : another being at sea, and swimming for his life on a mast, and having all his estate, which was five pounds, in one hand, and the Bible in the other, and being compelled to part with one, chose rather for to keep the Bible, and to throw away his five pounds, all that he had. These then did prize the written word of God, and they did walk thereby.

Therefore also, get your heart affected with love to every truth which you know ; for because men receive not the truth in the love thereof, therefore God doth give them up to strong delusions : men take heed unto what they love.

And therefore that you may heed it so as to walk thereby, let it be your continual companion, going where you go ; if you go into the fields, oh ! let the word go with you ; if into your calling, oh ! let the Scripture and the written word of God be with you. Thus shall you take heed unto it, as to a light shining in a dark place. And I pray tell me, are not these times dark times? The conjunction of clouds and miseries make dark times. Now the world is full of wars and rumours of wars : now men say, Lo, here is Christ, and, Lo, there is Christ ; insomuch as, if possible, the elect would be deceived. Now spiritual judgments and outward miseries are in conjunction ; a cloud and a cloud, a conjunction of clouds : surely, therefore, these times must be dark times. The eclipses of the sun and moon, and the falling of the stars from heaven make dark times : and when were there more eclipses, and falling of the stars, and of great lights from heaven, than in these days of ours? False lights also make dark times, for the more false lights are set up the more men are drawn from the true light, and so the more they are in darkness. And when ever were there so many false lights hung forth as in these days of ours? Surely, therefore, these are dark times ; and if so, what cause have we all to take heed unto the word, which is as a light shining in a dark place. What I therefore say to one, I say to you all, and to my own soul ; Oh, let us all take heed thereunto. And if any think that he is not at all in the dark, he is therefore in the dark, because he thinks he is not in the dark. If any think these

things concern not him, they do therefore the more concern him than others, because he thinks they concern him not. Think therefore on all these things, and the Lord give you a clear understanding in all things.